



MAGIC CHEF OF FIRE AND ICE

BOOK 02

Tang Jia San Shao

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

Magic Chef of Ice and Fire

(冰火魔厨)

by

Tang Jia San Shao

(唐家三少)

Synopsis

Seven unique divine blades:

The Snow Goddess's Sigh – Blade of Morning Dew (Chen Lu)

The Flame God's Roar – Blade of True Sun (Zheng Yang)

The Free Wind's Gentle Hymn – Blade of Proud Sky (Ao Tian)

The Earth's Waking Rhythm – Blade of Long Life (Chang Sheng)

The Fate's Hexagram of Hundred Transformations – Blade of Jade Pearls

The Universe's Dawn – Blade of Holy Brilliance

Hell's Eternal Curse – Blade of Devil's Devouring

These are the seven divine blades. They are also the seven magic staves of Ice, Fire, Wind, Earth, Space, Light, and Darkness. And most importantly, the leader of them all..... The Kitchen Knife.

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English Translation by Grenn, lovelyxday, DD, Miki, Zen @ [Radiant Translations](#)

Translation Check by Ruze, Warlock, Kiseki, Pseudonym, Jacob, Miki, GamerNissem @ [Radiant Translations](#)

Translation Edit by lunarlark, MrGoorin, Argos, lovelyxday, LikyLiky, Zephron, Bella, May, Eclipse, Zephron, jstone, Tenebris, therandomonet, Avinash, sibirmacek, husseinbolt, gcp42487, Sir Jynx, Azrael, Kobi, Hybrid121, Alterna, gcp42487, Liza, Jacob Alec, metalith, CinxChocular, editAS, Kuri, Hydramon, wavydashen, AmberShadow, Desert Zephyr, HoronXI, Anon, Surjit, LightShiner, domestic_house_cat, rmccar, Tang @ [Radiant Translations](#)

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Chapter 41.1 - Shaking Noodles

When Nian Bing heard this, his heart involuntarily shrank. Honestly speaking, the primary reason he left Ice and Snow City was because of himself, but at the same time, he had another reason – to avoid the attractive beauties there. He knew that, though they were good people, they would weaken his will. He had never imagined in a thousand years that Xue Jing would actually chase after him or even want to come and travel the continent with him. How was he supposed to respond?

“Jing Jing, don’t be like this. My master already told me that my culinary arts had finished their apprenticeship, but I still need more comprehension to tread the peak of culinary arts. Therefore, I must travel the continent for at least seven to eight years. You can’t always be following me!”

Xue Jing smiled. “Why can’t I? Anyways, you can’t toss me aside. No matter how many years it will be, I will follow you. If you feel that this is inconvenient, then it will be fine if you just marry me. I won’t feel too aggrieved to marry you, okay?”

Nian Bing was speechless. He was truly afraid of Xue Jing. Forcing a smile, he replied, “Don’t fool around, how do I suit you? Young Miss, I beg you to let me go. For you to have come here to find me, did Uncle Xue agree?”

Xue Jing stuck her tongue out and answered, “How are you ill-suited for me? I think you feel that I do n’t suit you. I secretly ran away, but I left Father a letter.”

Nian Bing's heart was unhappy. At the moment, he had already recovered from the shock of Xue Jing's appearance. His face immediately assumed a hurt expression as he looked at Xue Jing without saying a word.

Xue Jing went blank for a moment before asking, "Nian Bing, what's wrong with you?"

Nian Bing sighed lightly and replied, "Jing Jing, you are gravely mistaken! How could you leave home to come here? You are Uncle Xue's only daughter; he has placed all of his hopes onto you. This year, he will be over sixty years old. As his daughter, you should stay by his side and be filial to him! If you sneak off to find me, did you think of how much Uncle Xue would worry?"

When Xue Jing heard Nian Bing bring up her father, she immediately lowered her head. Although she had a bad temperament, she was extremely filial to her father. In a low voice she said, "I... I didn't think of that! But you had suddenly left, and I felt like the whole Pure Wind House was empty, so I decided to come find you. I thought that Father would definitely forgive me."

He didn't even need to deliberately shift his mood. While thinking of his parents, Nian Bing's face would immediately show a sincere expression. "Jing Jing, compared to me you are much more fortunate. Do you know how much I want to be with my parents? But there's no way that I can. If my parents could be safe and happy, I would definitely throw away everything else so I could stay by their side and do my filial duty. I really want to see my father and mother again! But I cannot." His sorrowful aura was true. At this moment, he was not pretending at all. When he

thought of his parents, his deep hatred for the Ice God's Pagoda bubbled forth.

Sensing Nian Bing's sorrowful air, Xue Jing could not help but go blank. "Nian Bing, are you alright? Your parents? I had never heard you talk about your family matters."

Nian Bing breathed in deeply and said, "I have no way of confirming whether they are alive or dead. Although I know whose hands they fell into, I can't go there to look for them. Jing Jing, do you know what kind of person I hate the most? It's an unfilial child. Right now you still have your father. But you secretly left and made Uncle Xue worry! Listen to me. Today, you can rest in Ice Orchid City for the night, but tomorrow you must hurry on home. While you're at it you can ask Uncle Xue to wait for me to finish travelling the continent. I will definitely come back to the Pure Wind House to see you."

Nian Bing's voice was very sincere, but Xue Jing felt that something was not right. Before she had left Ice and Snow City, she had went to see Luo Rou. If not, she would not have known the direction that Nian Bing had left. Luo Rou had told her that Nian Bing was an extremely complicated person. If she wanted to go find him, she had to be careful and not trust Nian Bing's words.

Xue Jing thought for a moment. "Nian Bing, if it's like that then tomorrow I will write Father a letter and tell him that I am safe. Then we can go to the Profound Orchid Empire together. Luo Rou said you were going to send a letter for her. Once you've delivered the letter then I will go back, okay?" Her gaze was filled with warmth. All traces of the Wild Girl had disappeared. Although she

did not completely believe Nian Bing's words, Nian Bing had moved her. When she was very little, her mother had passed away. She and her father had to depend on each other for survival. Xue Ji was both her father and her mother. He had raised her with great difficulty. The feelings between a father and a daughter in Xue Ji were extremely deep. Hearing Nian Bing's words, the feelings of their father-daughter relationship bubbled forth, making her feel uncomfortable about secretly leaving.

After delivering the letter in Profound Orchid Empire she would leave? Was this true? Nian Bing harbored doubt in his heart, but Xue Jing had already said as much. He really didn't have a reason to refuse. He could only helplessly nod and say, "Fine. However, I will say in advance that you can't cause any trouble for me on the road. If you do, I will definitely not agree to you coming with me."

Xue Jing giggled and said, "Don't worry, I will listen to everything you say. Then it should be fine. I will even promise you that I will try my hardest to control my temper." When she said this, she was already counting her chickens in her heart. When she had left Ice and Snow City to chase after Nian Bing, she had already confirmed Nian Bing's place in her heart. At this moment she was thinking, Did you not teach me that I should be brave and chase after the one I like? It will take at least fifteen to twenty days to arrive at the Profound Orchid Empire capital. I can't believe that no feelings will be born between us in that amount of time. In terms of her figure and looks, Xue Jing had the utmost confidence in herself. If she could make Nian Bing go back with her, then all of her problems would be resolved.

Right at this moment, the waiter came out with a platter. "Sir, your order is ready." While saying this, he placed three plates one

by one on the table.

Nian Bing looked at the food and his expression suddenly shifted. His heart cried out in happiness. Even if he could make these three things, he was afraid that he still wouldn't be any faster than the chef here. The faint fragrance assaulted his nostrils. The most fragrant one was naturally the golden aromatic ring.

Xue Jing asked with surprise, "Is this not a golden aromatic ring? How could they sell this here too?"

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, "Jing Jing, we should try it first and see how this chef matches up with Chef Ming." While saying this, he picked up his chopsticks and picked up a golden aromatic ring and chewed it in his mouth. The instant the golden aromatic ring entered his mouth, Nian Bing was immediately moved. He turned his gaze to Xue Jing, and at the same time Xue Jing looked at him.

"Nian Bing, do you know the chef here? How could he make a golden aromatic ring just like Uncle Ming? Uncle Ming said that the secret of the golden aromatic ring was specially passed down in his bloodline. Except for him and his master, only your master Senior Demon Chef would know it. How could this be?"

Nian Bing shook his head and said, "I also don't know. Let's try these two. Do you know what kind of wheat foods they are?"

Xue Jing had been attracted by the golden aromatic ring and only paid attention to the other dishes when he asked her. She vacantly

shook her head. “Nian Bing, what are these?”

Nian Bing pointed to the plate where the yellow, cake-like food was neatly stacked up. “This is a Donkey Roll. This is one of the signature foods of the Harmonic Flower Empire, but making it is extremely difficult. I think that you will definitely love it. Try a bit.”

Xue Jing picked up a Donkey Roll and took a small bite. After nibbling on it for a while, her face immediately lit up with wonder. “It’s delicious, very delicious! How is this thing made? It’s fragrant and sweet, but also a bit sticky. The flavor is extremely wonderful.”

Nian Bing also picked up a piece to eat. While eating it, he said, “It is pretty good. This is an authentic donkey roll. The flavor control is extremely good. Actually, donkey rolls are also called bean flour cake because it is made out of soybean flour rolled up, like a donkey rolling around in the countryside stirring up dust. It’s base ingredient is yellow rice flour steamed with water. When it’s time to knead the dough, you add more water to make it soft. You then fry the soybean separately and crush it into powder. After the yellow rice flour is finished, you roll the soybean flour into sheets around it. Then smear red bean paste as filling and roll it up, then cut it into small pieces. Sprinkle some white sugar, and it’s done.”

Having eaten a donkey roll, Xue Jing could not wait to try the other dish. She pointed at the other plate and asked, “What is that? It looks yellow, and kind of weak. It looks like a fragile, transparent crystal and smells a bit like ginger.”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “This is ginger dough twist. It is more famous than donkey rolls. It’s a delicacy that comes from the southernmost part of the Strange Lu Empire and is popular with children. When my master was first teaching me about snacks, he told me that he had personally gone to the Strange Lu Empire and exhausted every method to obtain the authentic way of cooking it. It’s the same as the golden ring in the way that it has its own mnemonic for cooking. It goes like this: ‘It is completely handmade for children. The crispy pastry with the sweet ginger taste confirms the brilliancy of his culinary talent.’ The key word here is the word ‘crispy.’ In the process of making fried, sliced ginger, you can tell from its name that its ingredients include fresh ginger – it was named after fresh ginger.

“It is made by shaving ginger into thin sheets and mincing it, then adding flour in equal proportions with alum together into a basin. Cold water is then used to form them into dough balls. Next, you roll the dough out flat with a rolling pin five to six times, turning it into a smooth, even sheet. After sprinkling a bit of starch, you lay two strips on top of each other and use a knife to cut scores into the dough. Then you twist it through and fry it with hot oil. After it is finished frying, the ginger twist needs a sugar coating.”

“To add the coating, you must first place the shaved fresh ginger and soak the ginger in water to boil. Then you add some white sugar. After the water comes to boil, add malt sugar and osmanthus flower and continue to cook it on a low flame. Then add the fried flour to the boiled ginger sheets with the osmanthus flower and malt sugar mix. The fried flour will turn into a light yellow color. It will be crispy, sweet and fragrant – a very delicious taste. There is no need to eat this fried food; you can tell it’s good

solely from its appearance. Normally, I can make one at this level.”

Xue Jing was extremely familiar with Nian Bing’s culinary skills. Naturally, she understood that by normally he meant without using magic. For the three dishes in front of him to acclaim such praise, it seems that the chef here is not ordinary.

“Clap, clap, clap.” A drum-like applause suddenly sounded. A clear, melodious voice, said, “Good, I said that whoever could order these three wheat products must be a connoisseur! Nice to meet you, nice to meet you.” Nian Bing and Xue Jing turned to the direction of the voice to see a charming girl wearing a chef’s outfit come out from the back room, looking straight at them.

Seeing this girl, Nian Bing and Xue Jing could not help but gasp in surprise. They saw something very ugly, something so ugly that they had never seen the likes of before. These days, Nian Bing had seen too many beauties. He really could not cope with the sudden encounter of this sort of exceptionally hideous girl. That girl’s figure seemed to be pretty okay; her tall physique still held delicate curves. However, her face could only be described as frightening. A nose hooked like an eagle’s beak, a monobrow, protruding cheekbones and tiny eyes. The scariest thing was her mouth, where her two, yellow buck teeth stuck out like a rabbit. Looking at her appearance, there might be no one who would still have the appetite to eat. It was a spectacle too tragic to endure, really too terrible! However, she didn’t only have bad points. Perhaps it was because her appearance was terrible, but her skin looked extremely white and fair. That kind of tender feeling, if you didn’t see her face, there would be many people captivated by it.

Standing there, a feeling of pity flashed through Nian Bing's eyes. He walked up to the girl and asked, "Are you the head chef here?"

The girl looked at Nian Bing and nodded. "That is right; I am the head chef here, and I am the only chef. When I heard your evaluation of my three flour foods, I knew that you were a true connoisseur."

Nian Bing smiled and replied, "I do not dare call myself connoisseur. I was attracted by the word 'Superb' on the signboard. It seems that these three gold coins were truly well spent. For you to be able to make these three dishes, your heat control must be outstanding. Especially in the donkey roll. I could make a thousand-layer donkey roll, but it wouldn't be as delicious as yours." He was an expert in knife arts and big meals. Although he had worked hard at making flour pastries, if Nian Bing truly asked himself, without his ice and fire magic it would be very difficult for him to beat this girl. It seemed that this girl's age is not any older than his own. To be this young and to have reached a point of perfection in her culinary skill, Nian Bing couldn't help but admire her in his heart. She was the same as him, having received pointers from a master.

Chapter 41.2 - Shaking Noodles

The girl smiled. Honestly, her smiling expression was uglier than the average person's crying face. "Every chef has their specialty. Mine is wheat foods. The epithet 'Superb Wheat Foods' is a bit of a boast, but after an honest self-review, I decided that the food I made was worth at least a gold coin."

Nian Bing's heart thumped. He said, "I don't know whether or not the young lady knows a senior called the Mysterious Chef. The other two pastries are quite well-known around the continent, but the secret of the golden aromatic roll isn't known to many."

The girl's eyes sparkled with a hint of surprise. "To be able to tell the origins of my culinary skills with a single glance, who are you?"

Nian Bing smiled and answered, "I am just an ordinary chef. I have a friend who is a disciple of the Mysterious Chef, so I'm familiar with the Mysterious Chef's style of cooking. So I was able to identify your culinary technique."

The girl trembled from head to toe. "Could it be that you know Senior Brother Ming Yuan? But he is in Ice and Snow City!"

Xue Jing's excited voice spoke from behind Nian Bing, "You are Uncle Ming Yuan's junior sister?"

When the girl saw Xue Jing's beauty, she could not help but lower her head out of shame caused by her inferiority. "Yes, I am

Master's closed-door disciple. Master said that Senior Brother has always been in Ice and Snow City."

Xue Jing's beautiful eyes shifted fluidly, seeming to be thinking over something. She then stepped forward and intimately grabbed the girl's tender and delicate hands and said, "Come, let us talk while sitting. Since you call Uncle Ming Yuan your senior brother, it seems that I am one generation younger than you, hee hee."

Seeing the two girls moving to sit and forgetting about him, Nian Bing could not help but wear a helpless smile. However, he was very curious about the girl who called herself Ming Yuan's junior sister. From her achievements with wheat foods, it would seem that she was not any less well-versed in the culinary arts than Ming Yuan. Although Master had said that Nian Bing was talented, due to the fact that he had studied all sorts of culinary arts for almost eight years, he had very few specialties. But with the addition of his magic, he could become a top-class chef. Nian Bing understood that if he wanted to break through to higher levels of cooking, he definitely could not always rely on magic. He needed to spend more time improving his comprehension in order to level-up in all aspects of cooking.

When he made his way over to the table on the side, he heard Xue Jing ask the girl, "My name is Xue Jing. Uncle Ming Yuan is the head chef at our Pure Wind House. What is your name?"

The girl's eyes showed her excitement. "My name is Ming Hui. You are from the Pure Wind House? My master said that if I have time I should go to the Pure Wind House to see Senior Brother. How is my senior brother doing; is he well?"

Xue Jing nodded and said, “Uncle Ming is doing very well. Right now, he does not even cook personally. However, I have never seen him make donkey rolls and fried ginger twists! Is he not able to?”

Ming Hui nodded and said, “Yes, Senior Brother cannot. These two pastries were something that Master developed and adopted when Master brought me out to travel. Master had not seen Senior Brother in many years. While we were out travelling, I gained much knowledge, like a popular nursery rhyme among the local children that praises the fried ginger twist. ‘Buy a bag, get another bag of Qi Lu fried dough. The dough is soaked in ginger juice, cannabis flowers, broken into pieces, and looks like an embroidered flower. A bag of them is like crystals, when you eat them they taste sweet and crispy.’ It, along with the Qi Lu empire’s dough twist are called the two famous foods of Qi Lu.”

Hearing this, Nian Bing could not stop himself from asking, “Where is Senior Mysterious Chef? I would like to learn from him very much.”

Ming Hui smiled, her buck teeth protruding even more. “Master is not here. He left me here to work and set off on his own. He said that I had to train myself for many years. I also don’t know where he went.”

Nian Bing complimented sincerely, “Mistress Ming Hui, your culinary skills are extremely exquisite.”

Ming Hui was somewhat embarrassed. Her fair face was suffused

with a red blush. She shook her head and replied, “It really isn’t like that. Master said that I was talented, but had a poor memory. I could not learn every different aspect of the culinary arts like Senior Brother. He said that if I tried that, I could become a good chef, but it would be very difficult for me to become one of the top culinary experts on the continent. Instead, it would be better for me to learn just a single aspect of the culinary arts. Then the hope for me becoming a peak chef would be much greater. So I chose wheat foods since they didn’t have much of a bloody scent, so I could become a top pastry chef.”

Only learn wheat foods? Nian Bing could not help but harbor some doubt. However, he recognized the Mysterious Chef’s practice. When Zha Ji was teaching him, he said that if it was not for his dual ice and fire magic, he would have wanted him to learn only a single kind of culinary art. In that way, he could become first in his field, before developing other areas. But due to his magic cooking, he could make countless variations of food and flavors, so Zha Ji decided that it was best for him to simultaneously develop all aspects of culinary arts. Through long years of practice and comprehension, he would be able to gradually raise the level of his culinary arts.”

With a slight smile, Nian Bing said, “You are already a top-level pastry chef. I think that even Senior Mysterious Chef could not make wheat foods as good as you at your age. I learned much from Master Ming’s culinary skills, but when it comes to wheat foods, except for the Golden Aromatic Ring, his other dishes may not be above yours.”

When Ming Hui heard Nian Bing’s praise, her blush deepened. “Elder Brother praises me wrongly. Actually, I owe many thanks to

the Master for my achievements. Without his great care in raising me, I would not be here today. Master taught me for twelve years; I learned how to knead dough from him when I was five years old. When I was fourteen, I followed Master on a journey throughout the continent. Through three years of apprenticeship, Master captured the essence of the wheat foods from every place and fused them into my wheat food culinary arts so that I could be this successful. However, compared to a truly good chef, I am not much. After all, I am just a pastry chef.”

Nian Bing shook his head, saying, “No, Mistress Ming Hui you are wrong. Although you are just a pastry chef, if you could be the best in this aspect and become the number one pastry chef on the continent, then you definitely would not be less qualified than anyone else. Have confidence in yourself! As a good chef, modesty is necessary, but you don’t need to be self-deprecating. If you want other people to acknowledge you, then you must first acknowledge yourself. Do you get it?”

Ming Hui looked deeply into Nian Bing’s eyes for a long period of time. She suddenly smiled. “Your way of speaking is very friendly, similar to my master’s. If Master saw you, perhaps he would be very happy. We should definitely have some discussions.” When she said this, she turned to Xue Jing and asked, “Big Sister Xue, I heard from a travelling merchant several years ago that there was a really awesome chef that appeared in Ice and Snow City who was also a mage. He can fuse magic with culinary arts and make dishes with very special flavors. But I don’t know if this is true or not.”

Xue Jing looked at Nian Bing and said with a smile, “Of course it’s true. Moreover, that chef once worked at our Pure Wind House.” She and Nian Bing were not suspicious of Ming Hui at all.

Other things could be faked, but her culinary skill was definitely real, especially her exquisite wheat foods.

Ming Hui asked in surprise, “Really? Are his culinary arts truly as wonderful as the travelling merchant described? I really want to try the results of magic and cooking being put together. Sadly, I cannot use magic. If not, then I would definitely have experimented a bit.”

Xue Jing’s smile gleamed brighter. “If you want to know whether or not his skills are as legendary as they say it’s pretty easy. You can just ask him personally.”

Ming Hui was stunned for a moment. “Ask for advice? But he is in Ice and Snow City. Don’t tell me I have to go to Ice and Snow City and ask for advice? I cannot leave this place.”

Xue Jing smiled. “If you wanted to ask him for advice then it is quite simple. You do not even have to leave your door to ask him that because he is right here.”

Ming Hui continued to be obtuse. She still did not understand what Xue Jing meant. She looked at Xue Jing, who in turn directed her gaze towards Nian Bing. Xue Jing said, “The Magic Chef of Ice and Fire that you have heard of is close; he’s right before your eyes!”

Ming Hui stared at Nian Bing with wide eyes. “Y-you are the legendary Magic Chef of Ice and Fire?”

Nian Bing smiled painfully and said, “I am not some sort of ancient curio. I really do not want the word “legendary” used to describe me. However, I truly am the chef who uses magic in cooking that you have heard of. You can call me Nian Bing.”

Ming Hui could not disguise her expression. Just like when Nian Bing had seen Ming Yuan for the first time, when chefs of their caliber meet other chefs of at least equal skill, there would be a special feeling. It was like meeting a relative. “That’s great. I will definitely ask for some advice. Elder Brother Nian Bing, will you come with me into the kitchen?”

Nian Bing smiled. “I also want to learn the art of wheat foods from you. Honestly speaking, if it’s just wheat foods, I am definitely worse than you.”

Ming Hui took the initiative to grab Nian Bing’s hand, already forgetting the difference between men and women as she tugged him into the kitchen. Because of Ming Hui’s appearance, Xue Jing was not jealous at all. She simply smiled as she followed behind them to the kitchen. As the inheritor of the Pure Wind House, how could she miss the exchange of pointers between two top-level chefs?

The kitchen of Supreme Wheat Foods was very large, but empty. Like Ming Hui had said, the only chef in here was her. She didn’t even have any subordinates. The most eye-catching thing in the kitchen was the gigantic kneading board. The left side was covered by a clean cloth. Without even looking, Nian Bing knew that beneath that cloth were every which kind of doughs.

“Ming Hui, what sort of wheat food are you most skilled in? Can I try a bit? I have still not eaten my fill from the refreshments.” Nian Bing smiled while stating his request.

Ming Hui said, “My number one specialty is beef noodle soup. Please let me know your thoughts, Elder Brother Nian Bing.” While speaking, she opened the door to the oven below and started boiling a pot of clear water.

Beef noodle soup sounded very simple, but Nian Bing knew that the beef noodle soup that Ming Hui makes could not be so simple. Just as he was thinking that, he saw Ming Hui take out a length of dough from underneath the cloth. The dough was cylindrical in shape, roughly about a sixth of a meter in length and as thick as a girl’s forearm. She looked at Nian Bing and asked, “I don’t know what kind of noodles Elder Brother would like to eat. Thick, thin, wide, or flat? Please choose one.”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “Thin noodles demands the most skill of a chef out of all the types of noodles, so I want thin noodles. They are also easier to digest. Noodle thickness is divided into two pillars, two threads, single thread, hair thread, and [silk nest](#). I want you to make noodles that are even finer than silk nest noodles, please.”

“Okay.” A simple, one word reply. Suddenly, Ming Hui’s expression changed. Her expression was something that Nian Bing knew well. It was the look of concentration and spirit in perfect harmony. Her eyes stared at the dough on the kneading board. With her two hands, she gently pushed forward, making the dough stretch out slowly. Nian Bing knew that she was getting a feel for

the toughness of the dough. Different toughness would call for entirely different ways of making the noodles. Even if she kneaded the dough well, if it was made into noodles before it was completely ready, it would be very easy for her to slip up.

Xue Jing asked quietly, “Nian Bing, could it be that her beef noodle soup has some sort of special seasoning? A special recipe?”

Nian Bing shook his head and answered, “If she relied on a seasoning or secret recipe, then she could not call herself a top-class pastry chef. I think that she is making ordinary beef noodle soup. But just wait and see, it will definitely be different from the beef noodle soup that you usually eat. From her technique it is evident that she will use the pulled – noodle technique. This kind of technique will make the noodles as thin as possible. In the perfect state, when the noodle – pulling is completed, not a single strand of noodle will break. It will all be one piece. Therefore, top-notch pulled – noodles are called ‘single-stranded noodles,’ or ‘top-quality longevity noodles’.”

Just as Nian Bing was explaining this to Xue Jing, Ming Hui made her move. Both hands pinched each side of the dough and slowly pulled the dough apart. Her expression was still as focused as before, her gaze following the movement of the noodle. In this moment, it seemed as though the dough had fused with her body.

When she started, her movements were very slow. She stretched the dough to twice its original size, though the dough was still kept in its original cylindrical shape. Suddenly, both of her hands shook and the dough in her hands became longer in an instant, hitting the kneading board with a slap. After the dough had hit, her left

hand passed the end of the dough to the right hand as fast as a lightning. Simultaneously, her left hand pushed through the bend in the dough and instantly pulled it longer, making one into two.

Ming Hui's movements got faster such that it became fast enough to be too much for the eye to take in. The white dough in her hands seemed to be alive while it interweaved and folded. The original cylindrical shape of the dough soon became like silk threads. Nian Bing had been counting all the while. In just a short moment, that not too large piece of dough had actually turned into 4096 strands. Nian Bing had also learned how to pull noodles. He admitted to himself with a dough of that size he could at most make that many strands without breaking the dough. But Ming Hui did not stop her hand movements. She merely slowed down to her original speed. Both of her hands were shaking slightly, seeming as they never really grabbed onto the dough. However, her hands were trembling in a very rhythmic pattern. The 4096 strands of dough seemed to be shaking in her hands, like a hair softly swaying. Because of the extreme thinness of the noodle, it was hair-raising for Nian Bing and Xue Jing to watch the noodle touch the noodle as the noodle strands could snap at any moment.

Chapter 42.1 - The Seven Great Forbidden Techniques And The Five Distinguished Knives

Seeing this, Nian Bing couldn't help but cry out in his mind This was definitely what Master had called 'shaking noodles'. Zha Ji had mentioned that the most profound technique of pulling noodles was called shaking noodles. Even Zha Ji himself couldn't do it. By vibrating the noodles with your hands, the moment when one strand came in contact with another, a steady amount of force would be used to add toughness and flexibility to the noodles. Shaking noodles wasn't suitable for anything thicker than thread noodles. However, Nian Bing was worried that if the dough was folded into another layer, would the noodles cook poorly when they were put in the water because they were so fine?

Finally, the instant the noodles, while shaking, reached the iron pot, Ming Hui suddenly left the kneading board. She pulled her left hand like lightning and raised her right hand high, letting the 4096 single-strand noodles hang in mid air. Her left arm darted through the middle of the noodle strands, and her right hand brought the noodles downwards. Through a pull and tug, a 8192 strands of noodles appeared; not a single strand was broken. It was the sort of godly skill that made people astonished to see.

With a light toss, the noodles returned to the length they had been when they were 4096 strands. Ming Hui shook her left hand and brought her left hand to the pot, gently placing the noodles into the boiling water. The iron pot was very large, almost one meter in diameter. Ming Hui set the noodles down at the edge of the iron pot and immediately took out a pair of chopsticks, using

their front ends to separate the dough to the two sides without poking the noodles. Rather, she stirred the boiling water at the center of the pot rapidly. At this moment, her hands had suddenly become milky white. The steaming vapor was like sparkling pearls. The steam condensed into beads on her hands, which made Nian Bing recall something Zha ji had once said: “The azure ocean moon pearls have tears.”

Her motions became faster, all of the water swirling rapidly from the stirring. Since the noodles rotated in a rhythm, the boiling water did not bubble because of the speed of the mixing.

Nian Bing said in surprise, “I got it. This is ‘Wrapping Noodles in Water’ How amazing.” Wrapping Noodles in Water referred to the process of stirring water into a whirlpool, making all of the water in the pot reach boiling point without boiling over. As such, the food will be more evenly heated and won’t have its shape affected by the bubbling of the water. The whirlpool wasn’t very difficult; with enough training, any chef could use chopsticks to stir the water into a whirlpool. The difficult thing was that she was stirring boiling water. Although her hand did not directly touch the water, the temperature of the boiling water was not low at all. This technique demanded that the chef couldn’t be affected by the boiling water and must keep their hand steady. So the Wrapping Noodles in Water technique was extremely difficult.

Her chopsticks suddenly left the water, but the boiling water in the iron pot continued to spin fast under the effects of inertia. Ming Hui brought out a large bowl and opened an iron container on the side. From the container she ladled out a light yellow broth. The broth was extremely transparent without any impurities. She ladled it into the bowl. When it was still, it resembled a large,

yellow water crystal; this was the prepared beef broth.

Her chopsticks went into the pot like lightning and gently picked up all the noodles, without missing a single strand, and placed the noodles into the bowl. Steam rose from the noodles as it soaked into the beef broth, immediately raising the waterline of the bowl to the halfway point. The chopsticks adroitly drove the noodles in the bowl to spin clockwise, then immediately afterwards turning it clockwise once. Just as it had stopped, the slightly yellow noodles lay neatly in the bowl. Fetching a large iron spoon, she took out a spoonful of hot noodle broth and poured it into the very front, then placed her hand into the iron bucket and took out several slices of paper-thin daikon and wide pieces of cutlet that had been boiling in the beef broth and placed them on the noodles. Finally, she added a pinch of cilantro into the soup and dripped a bit of hot pepper oil into the soup.

“Beef noodle consomme soup. Please sample it.” There was visible sweat on Ming Hui’s forehead, but her hands had regained their original color. She looked at Nian Bing with eyes full of self-confidence.

Nian Bing did not say anything. He simply nodded at her and took the chopsticks from Ming Hui and started eating.

“I also want to eat some, so leave me a bit. Hey, you’re not allowed to eat that fast.” Xue jing stole some of Nian Bing’s noodles in dissatisfaction. Nian Bing actually was not eating fast at all. He had only eaten several strands of noodles, a slice of beef and drank a mouthful of the noodle soup.

He passed the chopsticks to Xue Jing and sighed lightly. He gazed at Ming Hui in admiration. “I submit. Since I have left my master, this is the first time that I have sincerely admired a chef. Your beef noodle soup is definitely worthy of the words ‘Superb Wheat Foods.’”

Ming Hui’s hideous faced flushed. “Elder Brother Nian Bing, you flatter me.”

“Wa, this really is delicious. I normally dislike noodles the most, but these noodles are so delicious! Ming Hui, why are your noodles so thin, without having a super soft texture. Every strand has such tension, and it tastes extremely good. On top of that, none of the noodles stick together. Also, did you cut this beef yourself? It’s flavor is wonderful. The broth is also tasty. Isn’t it made of beef bones, wait, no, beef bone broth isn’t this delicious! Moreover, its scent is a bit strange. Obviously it smells like beef broth, so why do I get this special feeling from it?” Xue Jing’s cultured table manners were nowhere to be seen. The beef noodle soup wasn’t scalding hot, so besides the little bit that Nian Bing had eaten, the remainder had entered Xue Jing’s stomach in a moment.

Ming Hui covered up her smile and said, “Big Sister Xue Jing, eat a little bit slower. If you still want to eat some more, I can make you more, no problem!”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “She’s done a pretty good job of assessing it. No doubt she is the successor of the Pure Wind house. Ming Hui, allow me to comment on what I think are the special characteristics of your beef noodle consomme soup. See whether if I’m right or not.” After muttering to himself for a moment, he

then said, “The beef noodle soup that you make utilizes the traditional cow bone marrow. You’ve completely embodied the principle of ‘one clear, two white, three red, four green and five yellow’. The ‘one clear’ is the clear broth; the ‘two white’ is the daikon. The ‘three red’ came from the redness of chilli oil. ‘Four green’ was the addition of the cilantro, and ‘five yellow’ was derived from the yellow of the noodle. These vivid and fresh colors stimulates one’s appetite.

“On top of that, you’ve added your own innovation into this soup. In terms of the thinness of the noodles alones, I cannot compare. The shaking noodles are truly wonderful to actually be able to pull noodles this thin, while still maintaining its toughness. It is far thinner than even silk nest noodles, but still has strength and did not affect the taste. What I admire the most is your wrapping noodles in water technique, which is something that even my master cannot do. I think that you must’ve trained your right hand in a special way to be able to stand the scorching hot steam. However, it’s not enough to be able to withstand the battering of the scalding water vapor. Without a staunch will, you would not be able to keep your hand steady. This is what I admire the most!

The noodles are very good noodles, and at the same time, the soup is very good soup. Just as Jing’er said, your beef broth utilizes beef bones as well as the best beef treated with butter simmered to cook it. But it’s not that simple; you also put in at least three different kind of medicinal herbs. Not only did the medicinal herbs didn’t alter the flavor of the beef broth, they even acted as a foil to the umami of the broth. At the same time, the medicinal herbs’ flavor fused into the soup, making the beef broth even fresher so you could immediately sense the fragrances of the medicinal herbs. The two flavors completely harmonized together, making a top-

quality beef broth. It really is very wonderful.”

“Even the beef wasn’t simply cut. It had to do with the beef itself. The best part of a cow’s body is not in its [chuck](#), or the place where the meat is thickest or has lots of muscle. Rather it’s the beef ribs. Beef ribs are plenty tough themselves, and at the same time it’s easiest to bring out its taste. Using it in beef noodle soup is the best choice! With all of these things combined, I dare say that there isn’t a beef noodle consomme soup that is any better than yours on the entire continent! I truly, truly admire you.”

Ming Hui’s eyes showed her surprise. “Elder brother, nothing you said was wrong, except for the fact that you couldn’t name the three medicinal herbs. Other than that nothing was off, no doubt you are the Magic Chef of Ice and Fire!”

Xue Jing caressed her stomach in satisfaction as she went up to the two who were talking at the side. She looked at Nian Bing suspiciously. “The beef noodle soup was really delicious, but was it really as complicated as you say? Little Sister Ming Hui, don’t be afraid to hit him. Just hit him, and I will support you. I think that he definitely must’ve said something wrong.”

Ming Hui shook his head and said, “No, there was nothing that he said that was wrong. Even if it was me, the only better description I could give would be the names of those three medicinal herbs. Elder Brother Nian Bing’s culinary arts are definitely far greater than mine. Elder brother, now I would like to try your ice and fire cooking. Can I?”

Nian Bing smiled and replied, “Having eaten your delicious beef

noodle consomme soup, how could I hold back?" Having said this, he could not help but look at Xue Jing. The one who really ate the most was her; he didn't have any time to eat more. To only be left with the empty bowl, my stomach was really pitiful!

Although he was thinking this, Nian Bing did not stop his actions. He walked in front of the kneading board and thought for a moment. Quickly he decided on what he was going to make. He washed his hands clean and then pulled back the cloth covering the dough and took out a piece of dough identical to Ming Hui's. With a small smile, he said, "Since I ate your noodles, so I must return your politeness with politeness. You made beef noodle consomme soup, so I will make premium cold noodles. I don't have the ingredients I need with me, so I will rely on you." While saying this, he started the process of kneading the dough. He knew that if he didn't use his most consummate skill, he would definitely be looked down upon by Ming Hui. He did not want other people to say that he relied on magic to cook his delicacies.

The dough in Nian Bing's hands turned into a sphere. He was moving very slowly but applying a lot of strength. Gradually, his movements became faster. Every time he pushed the dough would be kneaded into a different shape. As his actions sped up, Nian Bing's wrists seemed to be boneless as his palms kneaded the dough. His palms wrapped entirely around the dough so that none of the dough could be seen; the shape of his hands resembled a ball, cradling the dough within.

Ming Hui goggled at him and gasped, "This is separating tendons and bones to knead dough. It actually exists."

Xue Jing asked with surprise, “Separating tendons and bones? Could it be that his hands and wrists have broken at the joint?”

Ming Hui shook her head and said, “No, that’s not it. This kneading technique is extremely hard to train. The primary reason is because of the wrist’s flexibility. You have to train your wrist to twist in a single direction, so its like your tendons and bones have broken apart. This kneading technique has another name, it’s also called Separating Tendons and Bones as the Hand Wishes. Like my Wrapping Water Around Noodles technique, it’s one of the seven Great Forbidden Techniques of pastry chefs. Through Separating Tendons and Bones as the Hand Wishes, you can keep the moisture in the dough while strengthening the toughness of the dough to its full capacity. Normally using this technique to knead dough requires a special cooking method to go along with it. Otherwise, even if you cook it thoroughly, you will be unable to bite it. There is a saying in the world of culinary arts that if a pastry chef can grasp one of the Seven Great Forbidden Techniques, then they can become a top-level wheat food master. I can only use the Wrapping Water around Noodle Mysterious Jade Hand, which is fourth on the list of the Seven Great Forbidden Techniques. I didn’t imagine that Elder Brother Nian Bing could actually use the third, Separating Tendons and Bones as the Hand Wishes. It seems that I am not as good as him in terms of wheat foods!”

Nian Bing’s actions stopped without any forewarning. He turned to Ming Hui and smiled. “No, you are wrong. The Seven Great Forbidden Techniques aren’t any sort of certification. You need to be good in every area as a top-level pastry chef. In terms of achievements with wheat foods, I am definitely not any better than you.”

A green light flashed, and the Proud Sky Knife appeared in Nian Bing's hand. The body of the knife was groaning softly, releasing energy.

“What a nice knife. Is this your cooking knife?” Ming Hui asked in surprise.

Nian Bing smiled gently. “This knife is used for cooking. For simple knife skills, this is the most suitable knife. This knife is called Proud Sky. It's also called the Free Wind's Gentle Hymn. I can't make noodles any thinner than you, so I will be using a trick.” His right wrist rotated strangely, turning the Proud Sky Knife upside down. His left hand held a spherical piece of dough that was smaller than before.

Ming Hui knew that Nian Bing's next move could not be simple. She saw the focus in Nian Bing's eyes that was even more intense than her own. The strange thing was that his focus wasn't on the dough, but on the knife, the Free Wind's Gentle Hymn – the Proud Sky Knife.

The water in the pot was still boiling when Nian Bing's knife finally moved. It seemed to be going very slowly, like a green haze. However, the silhouette of the green knife could not be seen. She could only faintly perceive that the knife tip had pierced into the dough.

With a flick of his wrist, a slice of white dough entered the pot. This was just the beginning. Directly afterwards, slice by slice of white dough, as if pulled by a thread. It was like it had formed a three inch line of light as the noodles entered the fresh boiling

water within the pot. Nian Bing's movements were exceedingly quick. He had been holding the knife handle upside down from the start, and his bearing was very light, but his gaze hadn't left the indistinguishable knife silhouette.

Ming Hui seemed to have thought of something and quickly moved towards the iron pot. When she saw the noodles boiling in the water, her entire body seemed to be stunned. She could only manage to spit out four words, "Brocade – Character – Void – Lattice."

Chapter 42.2 - The Seven Great Forbidden Techniques And The Five Distinguished Knives

Xue Jing peered into the pot suspiciously. “What is this Brocade Character Void Lattice. Ah...” In the boiling water she saw the noodles clearly forming characters; they didn’t look like noodles at all. Each noodle formed two characters that were one inch long and half an inch wide. The characters were written with a bold, powerful font, beautifully forming the words Ming Hui (明輝). Every strand of noodle was bent the same way, without the slightest difference. H-how could this be?

Ming Hui looked at the iron pot in stunned amazement. “This is one of the Five Distinguished Knife Techniques in the culinary world: Brocade Character Void Lattice. I-I actually had the fortune to witness it with my own eyes. Master! Did you know that I have actually seen the Brocade Character Void Lattice?”

Xue Jing shook Ming Hui and asked with concern, “Are you okay?”

Ming Hui shook her head and replied, “Thank you. I’m fine, just too excited. The Five Distinguished Knife Techniques of the Culinary World are much more difficult than the pastry chef’s Seven Great Forbidden Techniques. The Five Distinguished Knife Techniques have long since faded into legend. The Seven Great Forbidden Techniques can be achieved through talent and hard work, but the Five Distinguished Knife Techniques require extraordinary comprehension and years of hard training. When I first heard Master introduce the five knife techniques to me, I

thought that they were too inconceivable, that it was impossible for such legendary skill to exist. But today I was proved wrong. I was viewing the sky from the bottom of the well. The Brocade Character Void Lattice is here before my eyes. This is the fourth knife technique of the Five Distinguished Knives!” Her body trembled slightly as she looked at Nian Bing with an expression filled with worship. If she knew that Nian Bing could also use the first of the Five Distinguished Knives, Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons, what would her thoughts be? Nian Bing did not have a complete grasp over the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons, but after all, that is the number one knife art in the entire realm of cooking!

Under the deft movements of Proud Sky, the dough in Nian Bing’s hand continued to shrink. In just ten breaths time, he had already finished his knife technique. Without pause, he continued on to pick up chopsticks and started to stir the water in the pot. At the same time, he wrapped his left hand in red light and placed it on the edge of the iron pot. The instant his hand touched the pot, he swapped out the chopsticks in his right hand with the pot lid, which was then placed on the pot. Ming Hui and Xue Jing clearly sensed that the entire pot was trembling violently. The pot had completely turned scarlet, and a scorching aura flooded the entire kitchen.

After just three breaths time, Nian Bing’s left hand left the pot. He set the pot lid to the side, and, immediately, hot vapor rose into the air like a mushroom cloud. He grabbed a strainer with his left hand and used it to fish out the character-shaped noodles from the pot, immediately soaking them in cold water. At the same time, his right hand flipped the noodles to make the water run easily in the bucket. His movements were like flowing water without any pauses. If this was not the first time Ming Hui had

seen Nian Bing, she definitely would be suspicious of whether Nian Bing had been in her kitchen before. He seemed to be extremely familiar with where the tools were located and never made a mistake.

Nian Bing let go of the strainer in his left hand. Xue Jing and Ming Hui were surprised to discover that the water in the strainer was actually still. Nian Bing seemed to have finished his preparations. He turned to the two girls with a smile and said, “I used Separating Tendons and Bones as the Hand Wishes to strengthen the toughness of the noodles to three times what it was originally. I then used high temperature to rapidly cook the dough. Right now, it’s being turned into an ice cube. I used the two extremes of ice and fire to break down the inner structure of the noodles. As such, the strong noodles created by Separating Tendons and Bones as the Hand Wishes will not end up so tough that they can’t be bitten through. At the same time, this also brings out the fragrance of the noodles completely. The texture is extremely stiff, but you can bite through it. My goal is to completely release the original flavors of ingredients. Miss Ming Hui, I must ask you to lend me some of your beef broth.”

After saying this, he ladled out half a bowl of beef broth from the pot into a clean bowl. He added in a small amount of vinegar, a bit of sugar, as well as a bit of chilli oil. He mixed it evenly. Then he grabbed the strainer again, and using the fire element, he started to melt the ice inside the strainer. When the noodles showed through the ice, he put the partially melted ice cube into the bowl. The beef broth, that was at the room temperature, became colder due to the coldness from the ice. The character-shaped noodles appeared once the ice had completely melted. Nian Bing, started stirring and thoroughly mixed the soup and the noodles. Under the wave of his hand, a thin layer of ice appeared on the surface of the

bowl. It look like the bowl was completely iced through.

“Okay, it’s done. If the two ladies would try my Fire and Ice-Treated Cold Noodles.” Nian Bing’s smile was full of confidence.

Ming Hui locked gazes with Xue Jing while somewhat in a stupor. They both grabbed a pair of chopsticks and lightly poked through the thin ice. Each of them placed a chunk of the noodles into their mouth.

Ming Hui lifted her head to Nian Bing, her eyes full of surprise. “Ice cold noodles really suit the fragrance of cold noodles. Plus you added the three flavors of sour, sweet, and spicy, as well as the umami of the beef broth. This is truly delicious. No doubt you are the Magic Chef of Ice and Fire. I am pale in comparison to you.”

Nian Bing said modestly, “Miss Ming Hui shouldn’t speak so excessively. I borrowed your well-kneaded dough and your exquisitely prepared beef broth to produce such noodles. In terms of wheat foods, I’m certainly far below Miss. I was only able to employ some cheap tricks.”

A light sparkled in Ming Hui’s eyes. “Separating Tendons and Bones as the Hand Wishes and Brocade Character Void Lattice were cheap tricks?”

“You two can go ahead and talk; I’ll just eat.” Xue Jing did not care about techniques, or other culinary arts. She only knew that noodles in the bowl perfectly matched her taste. Although she had already eaten her fill with beef noodle consomme soup, she could

not help but be enchanted by this delicacy.

Nian Bing smiled and said, “There are no limits to cooking. There are still many things we need to learn, no?”

Ming Hui took a deep breath and nodded. “Yes! There are no limits to cooking. It seems that I shouldn’t sit around and watch the sky; there are many things that I need to learn. Elder Brother Nian Bing, thank you for your pointers.”

Nian Bing replied sincerely, “Miss Ming Hui, there is no need for you to be polite. I have also learned many things from you.”

When they had left Superb Wheat Foods, Ming Hui had already reached an agreement with Xue Jing. Xue Jing would write her a letter of recommendation, so that not long after, Ming Hui would travel to Ice and Snow City to practice at the Pure Wind House.

“Jing Jing, did you find a place to stay?” asked Nian Bing as they walked along the main thoroughfare.

Xue Jing purposely held onto Nian Bing’s arm. She shook her head, replying, “I still haven’t. When I just got to Ice Orchid City, I wanted to walk around since there were less people because it was evening. Tomorrow morning, I was going to leave the city and continue onto the Profound Orchid Empire Capital to find you. I knew that you did not have a horse, so I also did not ride a horse. Walking is really very tiring. How will you make it up to me?” Right now, she was in a very excited mood. Not only had she found Nian Bing, but she had also helped the Pure Wind House secure a

pastry chef with great ability. This time, even after she returned to the Pure Wind House, her father wouldn't blame her too much.

Nian Bing somewhat unnaturally tried free himself, but Xue Jing was determined to hug his arm. As a mage, he could not compete with Xue Jing in strength. Helpless, he could only let her do what she wants. The delicate fragrance of a virgin was emitted from Xue Jing's body, making Nian Bing's heart surge forward. Her delicate and supple body plastered to his arm especially made his heart throb. He was also a virgin; in front a beautiful woman, a virgin would always be easily enticed, even if he had a very determined will. In terms of figure, perhaps out of all the girls he knew, only Feng Nu could compare to her.

“Make it up to you? Didn't I just get you food to eat? Isn't that considered making it up to you!?” Nian Bing did not dare look at Xue Jing and quickened his pace.

Xue Jing said with a smile, “Of course that wasn't. You want to get rid of me after one meal. Do you take me for a beggar?”

Nian Bing forced a smile. “Then what do you want from me?”

Xue Jing said, “First, you have to take responsibility for all travel expenses; don't try to fight this. Next, when there isn't a restaurant at hand, you have to personally make food for me to eat. I will not eat rations. If I have to eat rations on this trip then I'll be very depressed.”

Nian Bing's face contorted in surprise. “No way, you are the

Eldest Miss of the Pure Wind House, but you want to ruin me, a poor person. You are quite heartless!”

Xue Jing giggled and said, “I am a girl. Could it be that you want me to pay? I heard Ling’er say before that the magic scrolls you make are worth a large sum of money, so caring for me is no problem. I don’t care. Anyways, if you agree then you agree, and if you don’t agree, you also agree.”

“It seems that I must accept my poor fortune. I hope that there is an empty room at the Orchid Fragrance Inn.” Right now, he could only hope to reach the capital of Profound Orchid Empire soon. Then he could get rid of this wild girl. Aie, why would he, who didn’t want to have any relations with girls, have beauties appearing next to him one after the other? Master told me to find a woman I love and live together with her, but could you call this sort of male-female relationships love? Although Nian Bing was smart, in this area he was still a simple beginner. Having Xue Jing chase after made him faintly feel something, but he couldn’t quite label what it was.

“It’s too late for there to be any empty rooms. Who would rent a room to me!? Nian Bing, the room you’re staying in should be a standard two-person room. Anyway, there are two beds so you and me can stay together.” When she said this, Xue Jing couldn’t help but shyly lower her head.

Nian Bing jumped in fright. “What? No way, no way, you’re a girl. How could we stay in a room together?”

Xue Jing snorted and retorted, “I won’t blame you. You’ve

already dawdled for a long time. Could it be that you want me to sleep outside in the streets? I, a girl, don't care, so why would you? Could it be that you have some wayward intentions?"

Nian Bing's eyes looked at Xue Jing with shock. "You, you really want to stay in a room with me? But that's not good for your reputation! For your future husband, if he knew, perhaps..."

Xue Jing's heart was filled with an indescribable twitchiness. "Where did you get all this rubbish talk from. Don't tell me that it would destroy your reputation. Whether I marry or not is none of your business. At least for tonight, I want to have a place where I can sleep peacefully. Hmph."

"Miss, you are truly certain?" Nian Bing probed.

Xue Jing snorted and replied, "Of course I am certain. Could it be that you are scared that I will rape you?" Saying this, even she couldn't help but smile. Internally she cursed herself. Xue Jing, oh Xue Jing. What are you saying right now? How could you even say that sort of thing?

Nian Bing thought for a moment. Right now, he didn't have a better solution to this problem. As Xue Jing said, his room had two beds. Although it was inappropriate for a man and a woman to share the same room, he just needed to be open minded, so there shouldn't be any problems. Thinking this, he could only nod his head.

Xue Jing let go of Nian Bing's arm and asked, "When were you

going to leave Ice Orchid City?”

Nian Bing thought for a moment, then replied, “Tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. Today I heard that there is a famous dish in Ice Orchid City called Deng Yan Pastry. I heard that it’s quite strange. Before, Master told me that I must go and try it. Also, the magic scrolls I sold were used to buy blank scrolls. I need at least a day to make them into protective magic scrolls.”

“Okay! I’m in no rush.” Of course Xue Jing wasn’t in a hurry. She looked forward to travelling slowly with Nian Bing. This way, she could have more time with him.

When the two people returned to the Orchid Fragrance Inn, it was already late. After the night watch had seen Nian Bing take out his room key, he let the two of them pass through the entrance. However, the night watch didn’t leave, blocking Nian Bing from bring Xue Jing upstairs.

“Sorry, Sir. We are an honorable inn. We do not permit guests at the inn from engaging in particular activities.” The night watch said rudely.

Nian Bing went blank and asked, “What do you mean?”

The night watch looked at Nian Bing, then looked at the red-clothed Xue Jing. Bluntly, he said, “You should understand what I mean. It seems that one of the two of you are not our guest.”

Nian Bing's mind was quick and he immediately got what the night watch was saying. He couldn't help but feel mirth bubble up inside. "This is my friend. She came to Ice Orchid City light and currently the time is too late for her to go rent a room, so I brought her only to trouble you for a tonight. Tomorrow she will go rent a room. If not, then you can give her my room right now."

The night watch snorted and said, "No way. I do not have the authority to let people rent rooms. Only one of the two of can enter." Inside he was thinking, This pretty boy actually used his looks to snag a beautiful woman. Hmph, I won't let you get your way.

Xue Jing was not as bright as Nian Bing, but with the guard saying things this bluntly, how could she not understand. Immediately, her anger flared up. She said, "Nonsense, what sort of people do you take us for. Get out; if you don't, then don't blame me for my actions." Having said this, her hands rested on her sword handle. Immediately, red qi wrapped around her delicate form.

Nian Bing was not mad, but instead was silently thankful for the guard who was blocking Xue Jing. He couldn't outright reject her, but he felt that staying in a room with her was inappropriate. With the night watch's obstruction, he could conveniently decline. He hurried to stop Xue Jing. "Jing Jing, don't make trouble. Did you forget what you promised me earlier? What he said was right. This was to protect the safety of the guests. Here's the key; you go up and sleep."

Chapter 43.1 - The Whore's Secret

Due to the fact that she was about to stay in the same room as Nian Bing, Xue Jing's heart rate shot upwards at an alarming rate. Although she liked Nian Bing, she knew that as a young lady, staying in the same room as him was inappropriate. Still, she was hesitant because she felt that this was an opportunity that she did not want let go of. Now, because they were staying in separate rooms, Nian Bing and Xue Jing both released a breath. There was still however, some hope left in her heart.

“Nian Bing, then what about you? If I stay in your room then what will you do?”

Nian Bing gave a little smile and replied, “Don't worry about me. I will just rest on the sofas in the main hall for tonight.”

Xue Jing glared violently at the night guard. With a snort, she went up the stairs.

Seeing Xue Jing go, the guard spoke to Nian Bing, “People are not allowed to stay in the main hall. If you want to stay here, please come again in the morning. I am closing the door now, so I request that you leave.”

Nian Bing went blank. He wrinkled his brows and asked, “Are you targeting me? I have not committed any offence against you.”

The guard said coldly, “I am just following the rules. Please leave.”

Naturally, Nian Bing could not lower himself to the level of this ordinary citizen. Helpless to do anything, he could only once again exit the Orchid Fragrance Inn.

It was late at night, and Nian Bing could not help but shiver as the cool October wind blew. He hurried to mobilize the fire element to wrap around his body and immediately felt more comfortable. Although the night was cold, the lack of Xue Jing's presence allowed him to unwind his mind.

For Xue Jing to have secretly run away from home to find me confirms that she has feelings for me! Xue Jing likes me, and moreover, she is not as weak as Long Ling. If she wants to always be with me, what will happen on the road to the capital of the Profound Orchid Empire? Things that are outside of my control are really troublesome. I probably do not have any feelings for Xue Jing, but I definitely have some sort of longing. In front of beautiful girls, could I still remain so cold? Very difficult, very difficult.

Besides his mother, Nian Bing only had one woman's figure held deep in his heart. Towards Long Ling he felt pity, towards Luo Rou, admiration. Towards Xue Jing, although he still held fear of her crazy hysteria, there was definitely nothing that had evolved into love. Therefore, he he did not want to be in contact with these three girls for an extended period of time. Even if he did not sink into it, if Xue Jing's feelings for him deepened, it would be hard to resolve things. He could not hit her or chase her away.

Having thought this, Nian Bing's thoughts took a sudden turn

and started thinking of a suitable method.

Suddenly, his heart thumped. Why did Xue Jing like me? Maybe it was because my appearance attracted her. If I could make her see some of my weak points, perhaps her feelings towards me would grow colder. Xue Jing is a girl who jumps from love to hate. Moreover, her temper is also similarly volatile. Xue Jing, sorry, but I have to do this.

With a strange expression on his face, Nian Bing walked through the darkness. Soon he found his destination. At this time of night, there was probably only one kind of store that would not have closed its doors. That was – a brothel.

“Oh, mister, have you come to play? Although it is a bit late now, we have plenty of ladies here.” A thirty to forty-year-old heavily made up female [bawd](#) invited Nian Bing in.

This was a medium-sized brothel. When he entered, the strong smell of cosmetics assaulted Nian Bing’s nose and made his head spin. He could not help but feel flustered; he had zero experience with brothels. He did not even know in what the purpose of brothels were. After all, when Zha Ji was teaching him culinary arts, the former could not introduce to him to brothels. He just knew of their existence and had once heard people talking about it once on the streets of Ice and Snow City.

It was a wife and husband couple. The husband was like a beaten up, moldy eggplant as he was cursed out by his wife. From their dialogue, Nian Bing gathered that the husband had gone to the place called a brothel, which his wife could not tolerate. It was

extremely frightening when he recalled that scene. If murder was not a capital offence, he was sure that the wife would've used a kitchen knife to cut her husband to death. Afterwards, he had asked Long Ling what sort of place a brothel was. He had never seen Long Ling have a temper before, but right then, she had told him to get out with a red face. From then on, Nian Bing guessed that this was a place on the fringes that men liked and women hated. While he was travelling, he had passed some brothels so he was able to distinguish the building.

With a somewhat embarrassed cough, Nian Bing looked into the glittering eyes of the bawd. He said, "Is there a place where I can stay here?" When he had heard that couple arguing before, he had heard the wife curse the husband for staying out all night at the brothel. Presumably, a brothel was somewhere where people could stay.

Normally, Nian Bing's ordinary clothes would not be able to attract the attention of the bawd, but his looks were too handsome. They even made the bawd's heart. She thought, If I could sleep a night with such a handsome fellow, it would be worth it to pay instead of getting paid.

"Stay? Of course there is. Only, I don't know how sir would like to stay here! Ladies, a guest has arrived. Come and greet the guest."

It was late at night. The majority of the whores, if they hadn't already had a guest, were preparing to go to sleep. When they heard the bawd's summons, the whores without guests could not ignore it. Each of them came downstairs looking at the main hall

with sleepy vision. But when their gazes fell on Nian Bing, all of the whores stopped what they were doing.

Nian Bing suddenly shuddered with his entire body. He looked at the seven or eight young women who had come from upstairs. Each of them were wearing flimsy clothing, their arms and thighs for the most part, exposed. Some were missing the front part of their clothes, exposing their full tits. He had not entered society for very long, so he had never seen such an alluring scene before. He immediately felt his blood start to boil over and his heart beat faster.

The whores finally responded. To use the word “flocked” would be the most appropriate to describe how, in only an instant, they surrounded Nian Bing. It seemed like they had martial art skills. Their thirsty gazes and seductive posture were arousing.

“Sir, come to my room. I am the famed pure beauty.”

“Who’s a pure beauty. Sir, you see how big I am here? Come, and tonight I will definitely look after you well. If not, I will give you an twenty percent discount, how about that?”

“Twenty percent? Sir, I will give you a forty percent discount, how’s that? I’m so lonely tonight.”

...

Sweat, cold sweat trickled down Nian Bing’s forehead. Even

when he faced off against the Golden-Backed Land Dragon King, Nian Bing had not felt this nervous. He suddenly realized that his idea was no good. Such an erotic place made a beginner like him sink into endless embarrassment. What to do? What should I do now? While thinking this, he was unable to say anything. Looking at the blushing women, he found that he was covered in a layer of goosebumps. Heavens! God! Save me

“Okay, okay. No need to squabble ladies. Let the mister pick himself. Sir, who will you pick?” The bawd had seen much of the world. One look at Nian Bing’s embarrassed face, and she knew that this was the first time he came to this kind of place. If it were another person, she would be too lazy to pay attention. Since Nian Bing was handsome enough to actually tempt her, however, she took the initiative to help him out of his predicament.

The bawd directed the girls to stand in an orderly line. She stuck herself to Nian Bing’s side and rubbed her ample chest on his arm. “Sir, which girl would you like to choose? If none of them catch your eye, then how about me?”

Nian Bing lowered his head to look at the bawd he was forced to admit that this thirty-year-old bawd had charm not inferior to any of the other girls. Moreover, she had much more experience. Her ample, brag-worthy figure in particular made blood rush to Nian Bing’s nose. Heavens, this was a brothel? All of his intelligence seemed to disappear as he dumbly asked, “Th-this, how much does it cost to stay here for a night?”

Nian Bing’s simple appearance made the bawd’s heart itch, but she was unable to scratch it. Certain parts of her body started to

change. “Whether you have money or not, for Sir to grace our establishment is our honor. If at any time you feel like choosing someone, there are many of us living here. You can pick as you wish.”

“Keke, then please give me an empty room. I will give you as much money as you wish. After staying a night, I will go.” Nian Bing’s words immediately garnered smiles from the women. The bawd kneaded the firm muscle in his forearm. “Oh, Mister, could it be that you do not fancy the girls here? For those who come here, why would we have a rule that says you must sleep alone! You should pick one to accompany you.”

“Why is it so noisy. Mama, you haven’t shut the doors when it’s this late? No guest will come.” A voice languidly called down from upstairs. Although it was speaking in a rebuke, one had to admit that her voice was extremely tempting.

The faces of the whores and the bawd next to him all changed. One of the whores mumbled to herself, “It’s done, it’s done. She has come and now this premium virgin definitely won’t be mine.”

Nian Bing directed to his gaze to the upper floor. He could only see a girl wearing a pink dress walk down from upstairs. Her figure was well-proportioned and fully developed, and her fair and pretty face only bore a smattering of make-up. An elegant fragrance was emitted from her body. She seemed to be a bit tired as she rested her hands on the railing as she descended the stairs. Her eyebrows creased, making people feel a different kind of beauty. Her appearance had immediately silenced all the girls. Although she was not an absolute beauty like Feng Nu, her looks were also top-

quality.

The bawd sighed internally and smiled apologetically at Nian Bing. “Sir, as you see, this our queen of flowers. Although she is a bit high-maintenance, she is definitely worth it! Ru Yi, a guest has come.”

The girl lifted her head slightly. When her hazy gaze and Nian Bing’s clear eyes met, her beautiful, large eyes immediately gleamed. Unlike the other prostitutes who had lost themselves before, she slowly descended. On her pretty face, her smile blossomed like a hundred flowers. She walked up to Nian Bing and said, “Hello Mister. My name is Ru Yi.”

Nian Bing had already gradually become used to the atmosphere here. Unlike before he was not at a complete loss. He nodded his head slightly and said, “Hello.”

Ru Yi turned her head to the bawd. “Mama, today let Ru Yi entertain this Mister, okay?”

The bawd wanted to say no, but Ru Yi was the lead player of this whorehouse. A plurality of the guests who came here, came for her face. If she had to offend someone, it would not be this money tree! Hurriedly she replied, “Okay, of course it is okay. Ru Yi, bring this Sir to your room.”

A single woman was easier to deal with than a gaggle of woman. Although Nian Bing still did not fully understand what a brothel did, having an elegant maiden guide him gave him a more

favorable impression. Going with her instead of a group of women wearing a lot of makeup was a lot better.

Ru Yi tugged on Nian Bing's hand. The two people had different feelings at the same time. Ru Yi felt that Nian Bing's slender hand was powerful but without callouses. His hand was very warm, but seemed to be as hard as steel. Nian Bing felt something else entirely. Although this was not the first time he had a girl hold his hand, Ru Yi gave him an entirely different feeling. Her hand was extremely soft, like it had no bone. What gave him the most deep impression was that her hand was ice cold. Her tiny hand was extremely supple, holding it was extremely comfortable.

Ru Yi did not say a word as they went up the stairs. She led him into the room on the far side of the corridor. The room was very large, decorated in things that were mostly pink. It was divided into an outer and inner room, but the inner room did not have a door separating it. Inside was a large bed, completely surrounded by curtains. The whole room gave off a special atmosphere.

"Please sit, Sir." Ru Yi's voice suddenly lost its previous gentleness. She tugged Nian Bing down next to the circular table in the outer room. She passed a cup of liquor to Nian Bing and sat next to him.

Nian Bing took a sip of the alcohol. A fiery sensation rose up from his belly, immediately calming his emotions. But still, he asked a dumb question. "Miss Ru Yi, there is only one bed here. Where will I sleep? Why do your rules here require go into a one-person room?"

Ru Yi went blank for a moment, lifting her head to look at Nian Bing. “We are a brothel.”

“I know.”

“Then why are you asking this kind of question?” Ru Yi’s eyes held a colder light.

Nian Bing forced a smile and said, “Honestly speaking, although I know this is a brothel, I don’t know what you do in a brothel. Can you tell me?”

Ru Yi replied bluntly, “So then, what do you do?”

A woman in charge of a brothel.

Chapter 43.2 - The Whore's Secret

Nian Bing looked at Ru Yi's gradually cooling expression. He felt that something was not right. "I'm a chef."

"A chef? You're just a chef? I have observed many people, but I have never seen a chef with such qualities like you. You are young, not well-learned, and even ran to a brothel to fool around. I can't see you as a good thing." When she said that last part, her voice had already become cold and severe.

Nian Bing wrinkled his brows and said, "Why is visiting a brothel not a good thing?"

Ru Yi said contemptuously, "All men use their lower bodies to think. Didn't you come here to vent your desires on women's bodies? When do you regard women like us as people? Though you look good, you have a gilded exterior that is ruined on the inside."

Until now, Nian Bing hadn't understood the true meaning of a brothel. He was sweating on the inside! He hurried to defend himself, "Miss Ru Yi, please don't misunderstand."

Ru Yi stood up with a cold smile. "Misunderstand? What have I misunderstood? Men like you don't know how many women have been hurt because of your actions."

Nian Bing's gaze turned cold. "Miss Ru Yi, there seems to be no enmity between us. Why are you targeting me so? So what if I came to the brothel to do those sort of things? You should attend

me; you aren't here to curse me.”

Ru Yi's smile grew even colder. “Attend you? A filthy person like you wants to touch me?”

“Since it's like that, I will leave.” Once he knew the true purpose of a whorehouse, Nian Bing couldn't put up with himself with staying at this kind of place, although, he would seize any opportunity to leave Xue Jing. He didn't know much about matters between men and women. He also didn't look down on whores, but he just felt that these kind of things were inappropriate. Standing up, he was about to leave when he felt a wave of dizziness hit him and sat back down unconsciously.

“You still want to go?” Ru Yi looked at Nian Bing coldly.

“Poison?” Nian Bing suddenly understood. He subconsciously wanted to activate the trigger magic scrolls on him, but had no way of concentrating his spirit. “Miss Ru Yi, there is no hatred between me and you, so why did you harm me?”

Ru Yi smiled. “Wait until you go to hell; you can ask them there.”

Nian Bing's mind became fuzzier and fuzzier, until finally, he could not maintain his consciousness.

“Big Sis, what happened to you today?” A vigorous figure leaped out from the inner room. It was a girl who was full of vitality and looked somewhat similar to Ru Yi, except with more a more heroic

spirit. She glanced at Nian Bing. “It seems that this is only an ordinary guest! Why did you drug him? How will you deal with this?”

Ru Yi said indifferently, “Ru Meng, take him outside the city and kill him. Make sure it is done cleanly.”

“Big Sis, have you gone crazy? The organization strictly ordered you not to randomly kill people. Don’t kill targets without any reward. You are...” Ru Meng was scared silent by Ru Yi.

Ru Yi’s gaze was like an icicle as it swept over Ru Meng. She said, “I was just removing a blight for the people. How is it wrong? You see this person, though he has a pretty face, came to the brothel to fool around. He looks to be no older than twenty. If you let people like this live in the world, how many girls will be hurt by him in the future? Did you forget when I was tricked? Don’t hold back just because he is handsome. In fact, that’s all the more reason to kill him.” Having said this, an overflowing hatred appeared in his eyes. Her whole body seemed to be trembling slightly, her hysterical feelings making Ru Meng visibly fearful.

“Go, you know what to do. I naturally have a way to deal with the bawd.” Ru Yi hatefully glared at Nian Bing and flapped her hand at Ru Meng.

Ru Meng did not say anymore. She gripped Nian Bing’s clothes and easily hoisted him onto her shoulders without much effort. Opening the window, she leaped out like a nimble cat. Within a blink of the eyes, she had disappeared from sight.

Looking at Ru Meng's departing figure, Ru Yi's eyes exuded a hazy expression. "All men are bad people. A handsome man brings disaster to the world. If I see one I will kill him. Killing a handsome man will help women live better."

Ice Orchid City was a very business-oriented city. Although it was situated on the border between two countries, they didn't even close its gates at night. Ru Meng stealthily carried Nian Bing's body out of the city. Very soon, she reached an isolated, silent forest and set him on the ground.

"I really have to kill this person? He doesn't have any qi aura; he is just an ordinary person. Big Sister, really. We can't kill the innocent! Never mind, anyway, he is just an ordinary person. I'll just explain to him that he has to get away from here. The continent is big, so Big Sister will not see him again. En, he does look very handsome, even more handsome than Big Sis's husband. I don't blame Big Sis for having such a big reaction today." Having said this, Ru Meng, could only helplessly shake her head. She took out a porcelain bottle from her chest and fed a medicine pellet into his mouth.

Even though she didn't know it, her good disposition actually saved her life. Although Nian Bing was lacking in scrolls, he had brought four trigger magic scrolls with him as defense. The strongest one was a rank 6. If Ru Meng had truly tried to kill him, the magic scrolls would sense that Nian Bing's life was threatened and would have automatically activated and with Ru Meng's current ability, she wouldn't have the ability to dodge it.

His body coldly shivered as Nian Bing awoke. “En? Where is this?” The dark surroundings had put him on guard. His mind immediately went to the scrolls he was carrying and prepared himself to respond to danger at any time.

“Sir, I am truly sorry.”

Hearing Ru Meng’s voice, Nian Bing discovered that there was someone next to him. He quickly stood up, and retreated backwards several steps to maintain a distance between him and Ru Meng. He immediately mistook Ru Meng as her sister because they looked 60-70 percent similar to each other. “Miss Ru Yi, where is this? Why did you bring me here?”

Ru Meng said apologetically, “Sir, I am not Ru Yi. She is my Big Sister. I am Ru Meng. I am very sorry for what had happened today.”

After careful scrutiny, Nian Bing saw that Ru Meng was indeed different from Ru Yi. Ru Meng was a bit thinner and taller than Ru Yi. “Miss Ru Meng? I want to know what had happened.”

Ru Meng was somewhat surprised. To be exposed to such weird circumstances and not panic, the handsome man in front of her was not as ordinary as she had said. “Sir, do not be mistaken, it’s like this. My Big Sister works in the whorehouse for a reason. I cannot tell you the specifics, but she is not the kind of woman that you think she is. Big Sister has borne a serious trauma, so she reacts pretty extremely. Sir, here is a little money. You should quickly leave this place and not return to Ice Orchid City.” After she finished talking, she threw a few gold coins to Nian Bing.

Looking at the simple girl in front of him, Nian Bing responded coolly, “Miss Ru Yi inexplicably drugged me, and you won’t explain to me what happened clearly. Don’t tell me that Ice Orchid City is your house? How will you prevent me from returning?”

Ru Meng’s eyebrows creased. “You, how could you have such a terrible brain. Could it be that you want to die?”

“Die? Your Big Sister wants to kill me? There is no enmity between the two of us, so why would she want to kill me?” Nian Bing harbored suspicion, while at the same time, he was internally cursing his carelessness to be so easily dealt with.

Ru Meng spoke helplessly, “I cannot speak of Big Sister’s matters. Anyways, this is as much as I can do. If you want to go back to the city, I cannot save you. For your own life, you should not return.” After saying that, she nagged Nian Bing no more. Her body suddenly sparkled and she disappeared from Nian Bing’s sight.

Nian Bing was left standing there, his mind filled with all kinds of thoughts. Ru Yi, Ru Meng, these two names kept popping up in his head. In the end, what was even going on? He was really unlucky to go there. It seemed that he had not done anything wrong! However, he was teased so, and almost lost his life. How could things be resolved like this? No! At the very least he had to find out what was really going on.

At once he thought of the space ring, the space system magic element rotated around Nian Bing’s finger. The space ring emitted

its usual silver light, and a black gown appeared followed by a strange skull mask that silently appeared on top of the robe. Nian Bing put on the mask and then covered his body, including his head, with the black gown like a cloak. It concealed his easily recognizable golden hair. “Finally! I can use this identity again. I really did not think that I would need to use it because of a whorehouse.”

“Mighty Ice and Snow Goddess! Please, lend me your anger to send me onto the opposite bank. –Snowstorm.” As a blue light gathered around Nian Bing, the surrounding temperature gradually fell. Snowflakes started to appear and surrounded his body in a spiral. Directly chanting spells is a bit more troublesome. It requires the chant to concentrate the magic and also wastes time. However, in case of magic scrolls, the magic power would be concentrated in the scrolls before hand; as such, when a scroll is utilised, the entire strength of the spell is used completely.

With Nian Bing’s strong magic control, the snowstorm lifted him up. As it flew higher, he began to see the layout of Ice Orchid City. He maneuvered the spell to fly into the city. While flying, he carefully recalled everything that had happened at the brothel. Obviously, the girl called Ru Yi was not just an ordinary whore. For the two sisters to offer their services to a brothel, they must have some kind of goal. Just as Ru Meng had said, Ru Yi definitely must’ve been provoked by something. When he had entered her room, her body emitted not just a cold feeling, but also a murderous one. But at that time he had not sensed it. Her trauma must be related to a man, just like the time when he had met an auntie as pretty as his mother. But the whorehouse was a dirty place. Why would they conceal themselves there? That is what he could not understand.

Thinking this, Nian Bing could not help but secretly rejoice. He wasn't rejoicing because Ru Meng had let him go, but because the alcohol that he had carelessly drank only contained a knockout drug and not a poison that could perforate his intestines. If not, even if he had many scrolls, he would not have the chance to use it. At this moment, he had already arrived back in Ice Orchid City. The whole city was immersed in silence. Nian Bing carefully controlled the snowstorm beneath him. He had maintained the snowstorm without completely using up his magic power.. In this short period of time he had furthered his understanding magic. Currently, he also understood better as to how to use his magic power more effectively. As such, maintaining this rank 4 spell was not that hard. Within a moment, he had already taken out the Proud Sky Knife and the True Sun Knife. After all, he had still not left the Ice Moon Empire so he could not use Morning Dew.

Although he had not been in Ice Orchid City for long, Nian Bing's memory was very good. First, he flew to the city gate to find the Orchid Fragrance Inn where he was staying. From the inn he immediately confirmed the direction to the brothel. Probably because it was too late, the lights of the whorehouse had finally been extinguished. Nian Bing floated in the air, getting a bird's eye view of the entire brothel. Very quickly he found Ru Yi's room. He lightly floated outside of the room. He hesitated for a bit. Just as he had thought of what he was going to do, he heard a soft voice inside the room. His heart jumped. He maneuvered the snowstorm to place him close to the window. He listened to the voice inside. It seemed that Ru Meng had just returned. In a low voice she said to Ru Yi, "Big Sis, how come you're not sleeping yet!"

Ru Yi replied coldly, "Have you settled things? Did you do it neatly or not. In this kind of place, where fish and dragons are mixed, I definitely don't want to leave any traces."

Ru Meng hesitated for a moment before saying, “I’ve already finished everything. Big Sis, you can relax.”

Ru Yi sighed softly and said, “Younger Sister, I understand that sometimes you find things difficult. Your heart is too soft; you’re not suited to be an assassin. When it is our turn to go back, I will report to daren and make him move you to some other job. Perhaps you can truly become a warrior.”

“Big Sis, I can’t do that. I was raised to be a spy! How can I become a warrior?” Ru Meng’s tone seemed to be a bit sad.

Ru Yi said, “Actually that is impossible. After all, you are not like me. I have already been exposed in front of a crowd, you are still hidden. Believe in Big Sister, there, definitely, will be an opportunity.”

Hearing this, Nian Bing who was outside immediately understood some things. These sisters were obviously not people from Ice Moon Empire. Rather, they came here to act as spies. They had all sorts of guests at this whorehouse, so they could scout out every kind of news and send it back to their country. It seems that he would just let this issue go. He didn’t want to get mixed up in this fight between countries. Thinking this, he maneuvered the snowstorm to leave. As he was turning, his black gown accidentally brushed against the window, making a soft rustling sound.

“Who is it?” A quiet voice came from within. A cold light burst

from the window. Although he could only rely on sound to determine where it was coming from, the cold ray was targeted right at Nian Bing's chest. Internally, Nian Bing cried, Not good. He did not activate any magic scroll to protect himself. He lifted his right hand and Proud Sky transformed into countless knife afterimages, cutting the cold light into different directions.

Chapter 44.1 - The Magic Reaper Appears Again

Ding! Because of the quick speed, the dozens of collision seemed to have merged into a single sound. Nian Bing only felt a massive impact hit him head-on. His chest felt like it had been struck by a gigantic hammer. Due to the force of impact, he flew backwards in the air. If it wasn't because of the Proud Sky Knife's knife energy resistance, he would have been injured. A dart-like projectile had flown out of the window and had turned into fragments as a result of the sharpness of the Proud Sky Knife. Nian Bing's eyes exuded calm as he guided the snowstorm to instantly send him tens of meters away.

Two figures shot out of the opened window like two streams of blurry light. Although they had very strong qi, they definitely couldn't fly. When Ru Yi and her sister discovered that the enemy was floating in mid air, they were immediately shocked. Like a violent whirlwind, both of them threw out three darts in Nian Bing's direction as they landed on the ground. Sadly, Nian Bing was already prepared. Although the qi around the darts were extremely strong, he only had to use the snowstorm to direct himself upwards to dodge the darts. A mage in mid air held some advantage over the warriors on the ground.

Ru Yi and Ru Meng each gripped a sharp sword, both having a cold luster. Just as Ru Meng was continuing her preparations to attack, Ru Yi stopped her and questioned Nian Bing with a cold voice, "Who are you?"

Nian Bing said coldly, "This isn't the place to talk. If you have the

courage, then come with me.” He deliberately pitched his voice lower and added a gravelly quality to prevent them from recognising him. After talking, he immediately made the snowstorm move towards the outskirts of the city. Ru Yi and Ru Meng exchanged glances; they knew that their identities had been revealed so they had no other choice but to follow him.

The snowstorm was a mage’s fastest way of achieving short-distance flight. Although Nian Bing saw that Ru Yi and her sister had the strength of swordmasters, they were still unable to compete with the speed of his snowstorm. He had set his speed so that he would be able to keep a distance from Ru Yi and Ru Meng as he led them out of Ice Orchid City to the countryside.

As Ru Yi and Ru Meng followed Nian Bing, they secretly made plans. There was only a small amount of mages on the continent – this, they were extremely clear about. Because of that, they didn’t have any experience fighting against mages so they didn’t have much confidence. Ru Meng became anxious and didn’t know what to do, but suddenly, she heard Ru Yi shout, “Graft Flowers on a Tree!”

Ru Yi emitted green qi as she suddenly leapt. Ru Meng immediately knew what she had to do when she heard her big sister yell those words. She held the long sword in her teeth and used a similar explosive green qi to push Ru Yi upwards with both hands, forcefully sending her flying into the air. In that instant, her qi had completely transferred to Ru Yi, and Ru Yi’s body flashed brightly as she became wrapped in qi, instantly travelling thirty meters into the air. When she was six meters away from Nian Bing, her qi locked around his body. She gripped her sword with both hands and slashed downwards diagonally towards Nian

Bing with all her strength, forming an illusion of a beautiful green fox.

Sensing the danger, Nian Bing became colder internally. Previously, the impact of the dart was something he was almost unable to withstand, much less this full-strength slash. A protection scroll activated, and instantly, a three meter thick, solid ice wall blocked the incoming qi. Due to the combined force of Ru Yi and Ru Meng's qi, the strength of the attack was terrifying. The qi was extremely sharp and its strength caused a crack, one metre deep, on the ice wall. Although the strength of the qi had weakened on impact, it still continued to break through the ice towards Nian Bing.

Nian Bing chose to use the ice wall spell not only to block the enemies, but to also give him the chance to cut through his opponent's binds on him, as the enemy's attack slowed. By the time the green light had reached where he had originally been, he had already retreated downwards on the snowstorm. Ru Yi's strength was exhausted. As she fell to the ground, Ru Meng chased after her. The two had been stopped in their tracks. Their hearts couldn't help but constrict when faced with the mysteries of magic.

Nian Bing floated towards the two girls, but maintained a thirty metre gap between them. The snowstorm still hadn't ended, but rather, under his strong spiritual force he continually compressed it. This variation of the snowstorm spell would make even a magic scholar apprehensive. It was defensive, so naturally it was the best choice. "So the two misses use wind attribute qi," Nian Bing said indifferently.

Ru Yi stepped forward, her gaze firm as she glared at Nian Bing,. “Who are you really?”

Nian Bing said, “You can call me the Magic Reaper.”

Ru Yi said coldly, “That said, did you hear our conversation from before?”

Nian Bing smiled disaffectedly. “I don’t really care about which country you’re spying for, but I do care about the lives you take. Miss Ru Yi, that man that you dealt with before is my charge. Seeing that Miss Ru Meng has been very kind hearted, I do not wish to make trouble for you. You may leave, only from now on, I hope that Miss Ru Yi will be more prudent when she acts. Those who kill people may end up being killed in return.”

Ru Yi turned to look at her little sister. “Meng, you...”

Ru Meng didn’t dare meet her older sister’s gaze and lowered her head. Ru Yi looked at Nian Bing coldly. “Mages don’t have an advantage when fighting against warriors. You don’t want to trouble us, but I would like to try and trouble you. If you have the ability then don’t run.” The strongest point about wind qi was its ability to raise the user’s attack speed. With a swoosh, Ru Yi had already arrived in front of Nian Bing in a moment.

Nian Bing didn’t retreat. Snorting coldly, the snowstorm that had been condensed to one meter in diameter suddenly exploded. Even after the compression of the snowstorm, its attack strength wasn’t any less than a rank 6 spell. Ru Yi felt that she had crashed

against a giant, sturdy wall and countless spinning blades of ice seemed to pierce her body. Her protective qi was ripped to shreds by the wildly revolving ice blades. The moment the snowstorm exploded, she was immediately blown backwards. Her clothes had ripped, exposing trails of crimson blood and more of her fair skin.

Blood poured out unrestrainedly. The variant snowstorm had injured Ru Yi severely. Though in an one-on-one confrontation, mages were at a disadvantage, but, this referred to mages who didn't have time to chant spells. If a warrior faced off against an opponent who had already prepared magic beforehand, the chances of winning would be very small.

“Big Sister!” Ru Meng caught Ru Yi. Her body had become icy cold; the snowstorm had put cold poison in her vessels. To Ru Yi who had wanted to kill, Nian Bing didn't hold back. Fortunately Ru Yi's qi wasn't weak, so she wasn't completely shredded apart by the snowstorm.

“Powerful ice element! Condense and convert into the ice from the ancient Cold River, turn into the magnificent ice from the splendid moon. Ice and ice merge and become two orbs of ice.” While Ru Meng was checking on her elder sister, Nian Bing chanted another spell. Giant balls of ice appeared in front of them. He did not dare to be careless, even for a bit when dealing with warriors.

At this moment, Ru Yi barely had a strand of qi left. Her blood continued to pour out of her wounds nonstop. Her most grievous wounds were not the cuts on her body, but, the cold qi that had invaded her body when the snowstorm had exploded. Currently,

the blood in her veins were freezing. Once all her heart vessels froze, she would die. Ideas about protecting the fairer sex didn't appear in Nian Bing's mind. He only knew that his own life was the most valuable.

“You! What did you do to my older sister? I will fight you.” Ru Meng set Ru Yi's body down and raised her sword at Nian Bing and charged.

Tens of waves of wind qi cut down from her sword. Nian Bing was surprised to discover that Ru Meng's qi was purer than her sister's. However, the twin balls of ice had already formed. This rank 6 spell could not be compared to the rank 4 wall of ice spell from before. With just a thought from Nian Bing, the twin orbs of ice endlessly changed their direction. Ru Yi's attack could scratch the orbs of ice, but wouldn't threaten Nian Bing at all.

Nian Bing had somewhat of a good impression of Ru Meng. At least, her heart was much kinder than Ru Yi's. “Miss Ru Meng, if you don't want your elder sister to die, then you should stop attacking.” He blocked Ru Meng's attack once again. The twin orbs of ice shone with a cold luster as it formed a bone-piercing chill and multiple ice cones shot out, immediately forcing Ru Meng backwards.

Ru Yi breathed heavily as she looked at the strong mage,. “You, you already killed my sister, but you are still making snide remarks?”

Nian Bing said coolly, “Your elder sister has received a serious wound, a fatal invasion of a cold stream. Right now only I can save

her. You should understand that killing you would be very easy for me, so I have no need to lie to you.” The strongest point of those ice balls were its killing power. If you were facing off against a group, then it would shoot off the tyrannically strong ice cones until it exploded. Once this rank 6 spell was formed, unless one was a Grand Swordmaster or higher, the twin balls of ice could not be destroyed.

Ru Meng turned cold as she listened to Nian Bing’s indifferent voice. It was true. If he had wanted to kill her, then he only had to use the spell from before to do so, and she would have no way of stopping it. “You, you really want to save my sister? I beg you, please save my sister. We only have each other left. My big sister originally didn’t have such a bad personality but because of a past trauma did she started to hate men.”

The twin orbs of ice disappeared. Nian Bing walked to Ru Meng. He knew very clearly that since Ru Yi’s life was in his hands, Ru Meng definitely wouldn’t attack him again. “I also don’t want to kill people, but your sister’s personality needs to be taught a lesson. I must ask you to take off her upper clothes.”

“What? Wh-what do you think you’re doing?” When she heard Nian Bing’s words, Ru Meng immediately became shocked. She obstructed Nian Bing, glaring at him warningly with the sword in her hand raised. When she saw the skeleton mask on Nian Bing’s face, she couldn’t help but develop a feeling of intense fear. Up until now, she had done everything as her sister had said and had, long since, developed a very dependent personality. Ru Yi had also taken care of her every need. However, now Ru Yi was unconscious. With an enemy that she had no way of beating, she really didn’t know what she had to do.

Nian Bing creased his brows and said, “Miss Ru Meng, your elder sister has many wounds. If you do not take off her clothes, then how am I supposed to treat her? Do not worry, I don’t have even the slightest iota of interest in your sister’s body.” He had seen many beautiful girls, any of whom Ru Yi had no hope of comparing to. Especially when compared with Feng Nu’s looks, Ru Yi was like the mere light of a firefly.

When she heard Nian Bing’s words, Ru Meng came to see the reality. She hurriedly got out of Nian Bing’s way and crouched down by her sister and helped Ru Yi to sit up. “You, you really want to save my big sister?”

Nian Bing nodded. “Of course, there was no enmity between us anyway. However, I hope that you will advise your sister not to treat people’s lives like grass from now on. If not, then the next time we meet, I, the Magic Reaper will inevitably descend upon her. Loosen her clothing.” While speaking, Nian Bing held the True Sun Knife in his left hand. The Fire God’s Stone in the knife handle was directly placed against RU Yi’s forehead. What could be more effective against the cold poison than the Fire God’s Stone? A scorching hot stream of qi flowed into the space between her eyebrows. Ru Yi’s green, pale face immediately regained its flush.

Upon seeing Nian Bing seriously saving her elder sister, Ru Yi immediately heaved a sigh of relief. She set down her long sword and with trembling hands, loosened her sister’s clothing.

After the outermost layer of the cheongsam was the middle layer, and after the middle layer, the inner clothes. Ru Meng was

extremely fidgety as she looked into Nian Bing's apathetic eyes. Nian Bing muttered, "Girls are really troublesome! Miss Ru Meng, hurry up. If not, the cold poison may not claim her life but too much blood loss might. I can't do anything about that."

Hearing that, Ru Meng's hands stopped shaking and she quickly removed the obstructions on her elder sister's body. Once everything had been taken off, Nian Bing was momentarily stunned. He couldn't help but admit that Ru Yi, who possessed the strength of a swordmaster, had a perfect figure. This was the first time he had seen a girl's body so he couldn't help but be stunned. Fortunately, he was wearing a mask. If not, he didn't know what Ru Meng would think if she saw his blushing face. Taking a deep breath, Nian Bing forced his excitement down and tossed the heaving peaks to the back of his mind. Swallowing his saliva, he pressed his hands on Ru Yi's body. Nian Bing was very familiar with chants after several months of studying at the Mage Association. Currently he was not the Nian Bing who was unfamiliar with the incantations of ice magic. "O great ice elements! I beg that your kind hearts to melt into the water from the Holy Spring. Soothe the wounds. With the Water Goddess as my witness, appear, Spring of Healing, Holy Water."

Chapter 44.2 - The Magic Reaper Returns

A soft blue light gathered around Nian Bing's hands after completing the chant. In an instant, his hands had become pure white like jade as they undulated with waves while pressing down on Ru Yi. A while light hovered around Ru Yi's fair and well-developed body. Under the effect of the white light, Ru Yi's wounds immediately stopped bleeding. Nian Bing closed his eyes and let the warm water element flow out from his fingertips. When he felt that the holy water spell was complete, he moved both of his hands over Ru Yi's wounds. A milky white water replaced the redness of the gashes as the viscous of the holy water completely healed the horrible looking injuries. Very soon, the milky white fluid had completely filled the wounds. You could almost see the wounds being healed with the naked eye.

Breathing in deeply, Nian Bing felt tired. After all, he had just used several strong magic spells in succession, which took a high toll on his magic power. "It's done. Help your sister into her clothes, but don't move her too much, and let the holy water and her wounds completely fuse. That will probably take half an hour, then you can take her back. Don't worry, the holy water spells is a rank 5 healing magic. It's used to treat internal injuries. For normal injuries like this it is too extravagant, but the wounds won't leave any scars. Let your sister sleep well and she will wake up tomorrow, completely recovered."

When she heard that even scars wouldn't be left behind, Ru Meng's eyes were immediately filled with gratitude. Finally, she believed completely that Nian Bing didn't have any hostile intentions. "Mister Magic Reaper, thank you. On behalf of my elder sister, I thank you. If there is ever the chance later, I will definitely repay you."

Nian Bing replied with good humor, “What is there to thank. Don’t forget that your sister tried to harm me. I hope that she’ll learn a lesson from this. Mistress Ru Meng, what sort of trauma did your sister experience?”

Ru meng hesitated for a moment, but when she saw Nian Bing’s crystal clear gaze through the mask, a feeling of trust inexplicably welled up within her heart. She sighed, then answered, “It’s like this. When my sister was seven and I was five, our parents died due to an epidemic. Ever since we were little, Big Sister was extremely strong. In order to take care of me, she went to the main roads to beg. At that time, she was just like a boy, surrounded by other beggars of her age. Everyone tried to bully us, so Big Sister became extremely hostile towards others. When Big Sister was ten years old, we were taken in by our benefactor. Our benefactor provided us with warm clothes and foods and also taught us skills, giving us the opportunity to shine. Mister Magic Reaper, please don’t ask about who we are affiliated with. Even if we were to die, Big Sister and I would definitely not sell out our benefactor.”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “I have no interest in that. I just want to know what kind of trauma your elder sister experienced previously to be so hysterical.”

A trace of tears could be seen in Ru meng’s eyes. “Among the orphans that our benefactor took in, there was an extremely outstanding boy. He looked very handsome, his personality was gentle, and his abilities were nothing short of remarkable. At the age twenty, he already reached the unprecedented realm of a great swordmaster. At that time, our benefactor had said that one day, he would definitely become a martial saint. At that time, I was

fifteen, and Big Sister was seventeen.

“I don’t know exactly when it happened, but Big Sister was secretly love in him. She never confessed and buried her love deep in heart because Big Sister knew that he liked the benefactor’s daughter. Our benefactor’s daughter only came to visit once a year, but he would be happiest at those times. Big Sister admitted to herself that she had no way of comparing to our benefactor’s daughter, so she could only bury her feelings. Finally, two years ago, when the benefactor’s daughter visited again, he couldn’t take it anymore and confessed to the benefactor’s daughter. However, he was rejected mercilessly, without any room to save the situation. At that time, he received a very large shock and went out alone to drink. Worried about his state of mind, Big Sister followed.

“That night, they didn’t return home. Although Big Sister won’t say anything, I could guess that that something had happened between them. From then on, they had established a relationship with each other. I was very happy for Big Sister, but I always sensed that something wasn’t right. That year was that happiest year Big Sister had experienced since birth. They lived together, carried out missions together. Birds fly and nestle together. Big Sister, besides not forgetting to take care of me, did not care about anything else.

“It looked like Big Sister was happy, so I could not bear to say too much. I could only silently pray and hope that my intuition was wrong, but things never turn out the way you want. After they had been seeing each other for an entire year, the benefactor’s daughter once again returned. The outstanding him, actually was still the same as before and held feelings for the benefactor’s

daughter. Nothing had changed from before; the benefactor's daughter still didn't care about him. When the benefactor's daughter came, Big Sister and him had their first fight. I clearly remember how fierce their fight was. I worried about Big Sister, so I hid under the window to listen. Big Sister interrogated him on why he still hadn't forgotten our benefactor's daughter, and he mercilessly hurt Big Sister. He said to Big Sister that the thing between them was just about desires and not feelings, that Big Sister was just the benefactor's daughter's substitute. That it was just an investment for his feelings. He also said that he would only love the benefactor's daughter his whole life. Even in the future, if he were truly involved with my big sister, he would only love the benefactor's daughter.

“Big Sister is a stubborn person. From that moment on, her heart died. She didn't say anything more because he was someone the benefactor valued. My sister had murderous intent she needed to disperse, so she asked the benefactor for an outside assignment and came here. With the identity of a prostitute as cover, she continued to help the benefactor.

“I think that if it weren't for repaying the benefactor, Big Sister would have thoughts of committing suicide. I have seen her many times, with her back towards me, crying as she looked out at the night sky. Big Sister is truly suffering! Tonight you should protect your friend from entering into whorehouses. He is really too handsome, even more handsome than Big Sister's past love. There is some similarity between his gentle smile and that person, so Big Sister couldn't control herself and wanted to kill him. Mister Magic Reaper, in place of my sister I apologize to your friend. Please take pity on Big Sister and forgive her. From now on, I will definitely persuade her from doing stupid things.”

After hearing Ru Meng's narrative, Nian Bing's heart shuddered slightly. Every person has faced their own hardships. If comparing his story to Ru Yi and her sister's, he was even slightly more fortunate. His eyes fell on Ru Yi's somewhat pale face. She seemed as if she already wasn't that ill. Any traces of hatred had already disappeared from Nian Bing's heart; he sighed lightly and said, "Sorry, Mistress Ru meng. I didn't know that your big sister had experienced such a rough life. It should be me who is apologizing to her; I sincerely wish that she can find a good place to return to. However, please pass on to your sister that handsome men aren't necessarily terrible. At least, my friend isn't. Okay, let's bring your sister back now. I will escort you now, but be careful from now on."

Ru Meng carefully picked up her sister, and with Nian Bing's escort, they returned to the city. When they finally arrived at the whorehouse, Nian Bing quietly left. At the moment, the sky showed a sliver of dawn. Without any hurry to return to the inn, Nian Bing found a quiet corner and took off his Magic Reaper outfit and sat down, cross-legged. He sent his spirit outwards. While sensing everything in his surroundings, he slowly recovered his magic power. Although his recovering speed was slower like this, but by sending out his spirit, he was prepared to sense anything that happened in his surroundings. Thus, this way was safer.

When Nian Bing felt that the main streets started to fill with people, he awoke from his meditation. The Ice and Fire Source's special characteristics had made his magic power recovery quicker. At the moment, he had almost returned to his optimum state. Standing up, he brushed off the dust on him. He should return right now. He believed that right now, Ru Yi had already awoken, but he didn't know how her body condition was. This was the first

time that he felt guilty that he had used magic to injure someone, because he felt extremely sympathetic to Ru Yi's situation. After all, he had experienced a similar misfortune.

Nian Bing determined the direction of the inn as he walked along the main road, but he was not in a hurry. The food he had eaten last night had almost all been digested, so he prepared to look for a place where he could first stop his growling stomach. He would just let Xue Jing wait; the more she had a poor impression of him, the higher the chance she wouldn't bother him anymore. Thinking this, he simply slowed down his steps. There were many places to buy breakfast, but with just a simple glance, Nian Bing could tell that the masters of these breakfast shops possessed no skill. However, right now, he just wanted to eat something. He randomly chose an establishment that was clean and sat down. He ordered a bowl of rice, two mantou, and a dish of pickled vegetables. These basic dishes wouldn't be too bad.

While eating the food, Nian Bing looked out at the street and saw a store selling kitchen utensils across the street. Right now, he had a space ring so he didn't need to carry his belongings himself. Since it was like that, couldn't he buy some kitchen tools and put them in his space ring? Having just a kitchen knife isn't enough. Besides roasting, he couldn't use any other cooking methods. Right, he would buy kitchen tools. If he also bought some ingredients while he was at it, it would be a lot more convenient for him. Nian Bing sped up the movements of his mouth. After he had stuffed his stomach to the brim he immediately crossed the street and walked into the kitchen utensils store.

The kitchenware store looked very clean. The walls on either side were hung with every kind of kitchenware divided by category; it

should be complete. Although they weren't top quality items, they were good enough for ordinary cooking. A forty-plus-year-old, short, little man greeted him and said, "Sir, would you like to buy some kitchen utensils? We have everything here, so feel free to choose as you like."

Nian Bing randomly picked up an iron pot and rapped his finger against the surface, making a clear sound. He looked at the grain of the steel and could not help but shake his head. The quality is too bad. If I use just a bit of the strength of my fire magic, it would not definitely be damaged. The short man looked at Nian Bing's unsatisfied expression and hurried to say, "Sir, if our ordinary goods do not enter your eyes, I have some good ones here."

"Oh? Okay, then let me see a full set of your finest so I don't have to see them one by one." Nian Bing didn't have such grand hopes. He only wanted kitchenware with somewhat good quality steel and toughness so it could bear the force of his Ice and Fire Source Magic. The short, little man replied, "As it would happen, I have a full set of a genuine Sky Spring Pavilion kitchenware. Please wait a moment."

Sky Spring Pavilion? This was a name that Nian Bing had heard Demon Chef Zha Ji say before. In Zha Ji's description, Sky Spring Pavilion was presently one of the best workshops for making kitchenware. The kitchenware that they made was extremely hard, with good quality steel, could endure wear and tear, and protected against rust. Although they weren't exactly designer, good tools like theirs were hard to come by. Good chefs, for the most part, used the kitchenware they made. Due to the extremely well-known name of the Sky Spring Pavilion, the prices for their goods were comparatively exorbitant. One item could cost several gold coins

while a full set would cost several purple-gold coins. Ordinary kitchen implements would only cost two to three silver coins for a set; a Sky Spring Pavilion set was a hundred times more expensive. However, Nian Bing didn't care about money. If the shop owner here truly had quality products produced by the Sky Spring Pavilion, he wouldn't be stingy. As the saying goes, an artisan needs the best tools to do the best work. For chefs, the better the kitchen utensils, the more he can bring out his ability when he cooks.

In just a moment, the short man came out carrying a pile of boxes taller than himself, looking like he was exerting much effort. He placed the boxes onto the ground and somewhat breathily said, "See, sir, these are all quality products made by the Sky Spring Pavilion. Although the price is a lot higher, these are definitely worth the price."

Nian Bing stepped forward curiously and opened the topmost box. The only thing that he saw inside was an iron pot. The pot was completely grey, but on the bottom there was a rhombus imprint with the words Sky Spring Pavilion in it. This pot was obviously much deeper than the one before, and it was at least four times heavier. The pot also possessed a more proper thickness. When he grabbed the handles, he found that his hands were perfectly suited to their shape. He moved his wrists to estimate the weight of the pot and found that it was very to his tastes. Nian Bing really liked heavy pots like this. He rapped the side of the pot; the deep and resounding sound indicated that the quality of the pot was quite good and was also pleasing to listen to. "Owner, this is kitchenware made by the Sky Spring Pavilion?" Nian Bing's voice held notes of questioning.

The owner was blank for a moment and replied, “Of course it is. This was the crown jewel that I specially procured from the Sky Spring Pavilion’s workshop. If it didn’t seem that you understood quality kitchen utensils, I wouldn’t have brought it out.”

Chapter 45.1 - Sorry, Xue Jing

Nian Bing gave him a look and asked, “How much are you selling this pot for?”

The shop owner answered with a probing reply, “This pot was originally sold at one gold coin, however, since you seem like you are determined to buy it, I will sell it to you at half price, five silver coins, very cheap.”

Nian Bing placed the iron pot back in the box and said indifferently, “You should have left the crown jewel there.” Then he turned to leave.

“Ah! Sir, sir, don’t go! We can discuss the price, just name a number.” The owner hastily called after Nian Bing.

Nian Bing turned to look at him and said, “If it were full the whole kitchenware set, I would pay one gold coin. If you want to sell, then sell it, if not then let me go. You obviously have counterfeits; those aren’t products of Sky Spring Pavilion.”

The shop owner stared at him with his mouth hanging open, “Sir, do not make such irresponsible remarks. How do you know that my goods are counterfeit?”

Nian Bing smiled indifferently. “The material that Sky Spring Pavilion uses has a slightly deeper color. Moreover, the logo is somewhat incorrect. ‘Sky Spring Pavilion’ should be inscribed in a triangle. One gold coin is already a very high price for your entire

set. If my guess is not wrong, you should have bought from some place for a cheap price.”

The owner made a pained face, “Sir, even if it is fake, for this many pieces, a gold coin is too little.”

Nian Bing snorted,. “Too little? Then you should go find the original seller. For this kind of counterfeit, I would at most pay eight silver coins at any other place.” Having said this, he started to leave.

“Okay, okay, okay. Anyway, you are the first customer today. I will sell it to you for a gold coin. Ai, I will lose money.” The owner wore an unwilling face as he made the concession.

Nian Bing gave the owner a gold coin and carried the pile of kitchen utensils out of the shop. Watching his departing back, the stubby shop keeper snorted and said to himself, “What an idiot. He obviously knows it’s fake but still bought it; I bought it for just 3 silver coins. En, I made quite the profit this time. Hahahaha.” A single gold coin was enough to feed a three-person family for half a month.

As he left the shop, Nian Bing was also rejoicing. What an idiot. These are obviously the genuine products, but he sold it like a counterfeit good. I made quite the profit this time. These Sky Spring Pavilion kitchen utensils were not fake; the main reason he was willing to haggle with the shop owner was because the owner quoted a price first. A Sky Spring Pavilion item, even initially, is worth no less than one gold coin. However, the shopkeeper actually quoted him five silver coins for a single pot. Then

considering the fact that Ice Orchid City was a trading city, it was easy for him to determine that this set of Sky Spring Pavilion kitchenware was bought from some staff who didn't really know anything. The Sky Spring Pavilion was located in the Harmonic Flower Empire. It would be difficult for a normal person to see its goods. Since the shop owner didn't know what was what, Nian Bing naturally would haggle the price down.

Finding a place without people, Nian Bing inspected each kitchen implement before placing them into his space ring. This time, even if he had to camp out in the wilderness, he wouldn't be afraid of not having the tools to cook. Before going back to the inn, he also gathered every kind of ingredient that he needed and put it into the space ring. On top of his treasure knives, he also had a mobile kitchen.

“Jing Jing, are you still not awake?” It was light out when Nian Bing returned to the inn. Naturally, without the guard obstructing the way, he could directly go upstairs to his rooms.

The door opened to Xue Jing looking at Nian Bing dissatisfied. “Where the hell did you go last night?”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “I was sleeping on the sofas in the main hall!”

Xue Jing snorted and replied, “You still lie. Yesterday I went back to give you a blanket, but you weren't there. So where did you go.” While speaking, she pulled Nian Bing into the room. When he heard about what Xue Jing had done, Nian Bing couldn't help but feel warm. However, when he thought about his future freedom,

he became determined. “I just randomly found a place to stay the night.”

Xue Jing creased her brows. “There was still a place to stay the night that late? Confess, where did you go?” So caught up in interrogating Nian Bing about where he went last night, she didn’t even close the door.

“There’s always whorehouses available. Don’t you think that you’re very annoying?” Nian Bing acted as if he couldn’t stand how annoying she was.

“What?” Xue Jing’s voice immediately turned shrill. “You, you say it again, where did you go?”

“A whorehouse! What’s wrong with that? It’s much more comfortable to stay there.” Nian Bing adopted an indifferent look.

Xue Jing’s originally ruddy cheeks instantly paled. She pointed at Nian Bing. “You, you actually to went to that kind of place, you, you...”

Disaffected, Nian Bing said, “It’s my choice to go where I choose. Although we are friends, you absolutely do not have the right to limit my freedom. I am also a man, so isn’t going to whorehouses normal?”

Xue Jing’s voice shook. “Fine, fine, you, Nian Bing, even if I came a thousand miles to find you, you actually treat me like this?”

Nian Bing blinked. “Don’t exaggerate that much. Jing Jing, as I said, this is my own matter. As friends, I am just telling you the truth.”

Anger made Xue Jing’s pale, pretty face turn red. “Yesterday I let you stay together with me, but you made all sorts of excuses and went to a brothel. Why? Can you tell me why?”

Nian Bing walked over to one side of the room to sit. He felt somewhat nervous and didn’t know whether or not he should continue. He took a deep breath and replied, “It’s very simple. We are friends, and moreover, prostitutes do not require responsibility.”

“You...” With a whoosh, Xue Jing pulled her sword out of its scabbard and pointed at Nian Bing. “In your eyes, am I can’t even match up to a prostitute?”

Nian Bing shook his head and replied, “No, Jing Jing, you need to understand. Besides friends, there’s nothing between us. I don’t feel that what I did was wrong. This is also the second time you’ve pointed your sword at me. I also want to ask you about what right do you have to interfere with my freedom. I never said that I was an upright gentleman, and I didn’t force you to come with me. If you aren’t satisfied, then you are free to leave anytime. I think that Uncle Xue is awaiting your return.”

“I will kill you.” Xue Jing, in her rage, had already lost all her reason. Nian Bing had all along been taking advantage of her

explosive temper, but for some reason, he found it a bit unbearable.

The sword and red qi headed for Nian Bing's chest. In anger, Xue Jing had lost all misgivings. Nian Bing activated an ice wall scroll; a wave of icy blue light suddenly appeared and shielded him. With a slight ding, Xue Jing's sword was repelled and was imbedded in one of the walls. A blue light flashed and a long sword was suddenly placed on her shoulder. The pressure trapped Xue Jing, making her unable to move the slightest.

Nian Bing looked surprised at the person in front of him. "President Ka Luo."

The person who had come was actually Ka Luo. His gaze fell onto Xue Jing and he said calmly, "Fire attributed qi, floating like a drifting cloud, but when it explodes it can topple mountains and overturn seas. This should be Fire Cloud Qi. What relationship do you have with the Devour of Blood and Extinguisher of Soul, Xue Po?"

A cold aura poked at Xue Jing, and she glared at Ka Luo. "Nothing to do with you. Get out; I will kill him."

Ka Luo looked at Nian Bing with some amusement. "So noisy, do I have to hit you? You want to kill him? If it is just a misunderstanding, then say so now. Little Miss, matters of the heart can not be resolved by being impulsive." A sophisticated man like him could read much from the love-hate in Xue Jing's eyes.

Xue Jing went blank for a moment, but angrily retorted, “Get out, what’s a misunderstanding? He himself admitted that he went to a whorehouse. This, a misunderstanding? Let go me; I will kill him.”

Nian Bing stood and walked over to Ka Luo. “Jing Jing, calm down a bit. I have my own life, and you have your own. We are not part of the same world. If you what I do makes you mad, then I wish to apologize to you. However, I will not change anything because of you. At the same time, I hope that you do not change because of me. President Ka Luo, you can let her go.”

The sword in Ka Luo’s hands stopped glowing. The aura entrapping Xue Jing vanished. Nian Bing moved over to the side to pull out the sword in the wall and passed it to Xue Jing. “There are protective scrolls on me, so you cannot harm me. Sorry, Xue Jing, I probably made you disappointed, but this is my true personality. Rather than let you find out who I am in the future, it’s better to make it clear now.”

Taking the sword Nian Bing passed to her, Xue Jing’s hands trembled slightly. “Why, why are you all like this to me. How am I not good, could it be that I am not suitable for you? When I found that you had left, I immediately chased after you. I even wanted to accompany you to the Profound Orchid Empire, but you? What else have you done? What will you do to my heart?”

Nian Bing was silent and said in his heart, Sorry, Jing Jing. I do not want to reject you, but right now, I do not have the qualifications to accept your love. There is only vengeance in my heart, vengeance for my parents. I cannot let my heart be split.

Jing Jing, you can definitely find a better man than me. I forever wish you the best.

In Nian Bing's heart, the most precious girl was no doubt Feng Nu. Maybe it was because Feng Nu was the first girl that he had seen, or maybe it was because Feng Nu was the most beautiful out of all the girls, but in his heart, Feng Nu had an almost unshakeable position. Even so, Nian Bing didn't make any outward overtures to Feng Nu because he knew that he didn't have the qualifications to do so. Before he had avenged his father and mother, he had no qualifications to pursue his own love. He would always wait until after his revenge to think over these things, but even he didn't know how long that would take. He didn't want to hurt any girl, so he could only choose to escape and strive to raise his ability to pursue his goal.

Seeing Nian Bing's silence, Xue Jing's anger intensified. The qi on her sword was dimly visible, but she could attack no matter what, even if she was normally someone who would do whatever she pleased. It wasn't because of the unfathomable Ka Luo next to her, or because of Nian Bing's concealed magic scrolls. When she saw the handsome man in front of her, although she was angry, she could not resolve herself to harm him for some reason.

Tears streaming down her face, Xue Jing violently threw her sword towards the ground. With her eyes dripping, she turned into a red cloud and floated away.

He had always wanted to cast people away from him, but Nian Bing's heart was heavy. Jing Jing, stay safe on the road and hurry back to Ice and Snow City. That is the place where you belong.

Ka Luo took two steps forwards, picking up the sword on the ground. He scrutinized it carefully and said, “A pretty good sword. Fire attributed and made from scarlet steel that has been refined one hundred times. This sword is well suited to using fire attributed qi. A rare weapon! Sir Mage, do you not feel that this was somewhat pitiful?”

Nian Bing sighed and took the sword. “What has been done has already been done; there is no such thing as pitiable or not. The sword is a good sword, but I am not a good person. Call me Nian Bing.”

Ka Luo smiled slightly and replied, “That girl is pretty good-looking. It looks like though she has a volatile temper, her innate personality is very good. Why must put yourself a thousand a miles away?”

“I have? You’ve heard it, she was angry because I went to a whorehouse last night. It was me who was bad to her, so choosing to leave was the most correct decision. How could someone like me be worthy of her love?”

Ka Luo smiled knowingly. “I am older than you by many decades and I have some experience with observing people. Although outwardly, you seem very gentle, but inside you have arrogance like no other. People cannot be prideful, but need to have an unyielding character. I don’t believe that someone like you would go to a whorehouse to do meaningless things. Did I say it correctly? If my guess is not wrong, you didn’t want to involve that girl because of a particular issue, so you forced her away.”

This old fox, evaluated Nian Bing. “These are my personal matters. Don’t ask anymore, President Ka Luo. Since you have come to find me, you must’ve prepared the items.”

Ka Luo smiled slightly and replied, “Of course. I don’t know whether Mister Nian Bing was ready to come and get it. Bring it in.” Under his invitation, a tall, robust man entered, shouldering a bag. Without opening it, Nian Bing could already sense the aura of magic in the bag. “The things that you wanted are here.”

Nian Bing nodded and looked at the bag on the table. He waved his empty right hand, and immediately, seven magic scrolls appeared in his hands. These scrolls were made with the highest quality blank scrolls. “President, you may take these; be careful about touching them. I will tell you what spells are in the scrolls in a bit.”

Ka Luo looked at Nian Bing who wasn’t looking what was in the bag and smiled. “Since you believed in me, why would I not believe in you. Mister Nian Bing, I am very pleased at the completion of our first exchanged. From now on, if you ever have magic items to sell, I will welcome you any time. Price will not be a problem.”

Chapter 45.2 - Sorry, Xue Jing

Nian Bing nodded and said, “Since it’s like that, I won’t send off the president.” Right now, he just wanted to be by himself.

Ka Luo said, “Mister Nian Bing, yesterday I heard you say that you still had several special magic scrolls you were thinking of selling. I don’t know what effects these magic scrolls have. If I did, I would definitely offer a very reasonable price. Of course, it depends on the characteristics of the scrolls themselves.”

Nian Bing shook his head and said, “Sorry, these scrolls are not for sale, but there may be a chance later. You also know that I do not lack money and only need these magic item materials.”

Ka Luo did not say anymore on the subject. Smiling, he said, “I hope that our association and your teacher can cooperate well. After I leave here, I will immediately set off for Ice and Snow City.”

Nian Bing’s heart jumped. He said, “President Ka Luo, if you encounter that girl on your way to Ice and Snow City, I must ask you to take care of her. I have to recompense somehow.”

Ka Luo nodded. He saw that Nian Bing’s emotional state was unstable and did not say anymore. He and his underling left the room.

Xue Jing had left, and Nian Bing now had the blank scrolls that he wanted. Everything seemed to be going smoothly, but Nian Bing’s heart felt confused. He opened the bag and took out the

white scrolls for him to see. What should he do when he is in a poor mood? The best way to deal with some things was to just let them sort themselves out naturally. Currently, making scrolls was the best choice for him. Once each scroll had turned into what he wanted, it would be easier for him to survive on this continent.

Nian Bing went back to making scrolls. He had very high standards for himself. He no longer sought to just make a single magic scroll. Although the highest rank he could make was still rank 6, this time every scroll had harmonized well with his thoughts.

Three days. For three whole days, Nian Bing did not step out of the room. Every day he would call the inn staff to deliver food and drinks to his room. On the first day, he still felt somewhat depressed, but from the second day on, he had already forgotten all his worries and had thrown himself into making magic scrolls.

The more complicated magic scrolls were much more difficult to make and had a considerably lower success rate. Even with the depth of his magic control, his success rate did not even reach one third for the scrolls with special effects

Three days passed, and as Nian Bing gazed at the twenty plus scrolls he had successfully made before him, he had a slight smile on his pale face. From all the blank scrolls he had used, Nian Bing had successfully made only twenty or so magic scrolls, but he truly believed that any one of these scrolls would have a value comparable to all the blank scrolls combined.

He carefully placed some of the scrolls into the space ring, then

picked up a few to place on his person. He was done; the things that he needed to do had been finished. Now he must set out. The Profound Orchid Empire was his ultimate destination, but before he went there, he still had one more thing to do, for pursuit of his other dream. Well, the dream he took on for Zha Ji: to try the famous Deng Yan Food of Ice Orchid City. This was the last thing he had to do.

After he settled his accounts, Nian Bing left the Orchid Fragrance Inn. When he passed the Orchid Fragrance restaurant, he clearly saw several more kinds of chicken wings on the signboard, just like the ones he had made on that day. He imagined that the chicken wings made by ordinary chefs were definitely not superior to his, but better in comparison to the originals.. This was just his little contribution to the city, and he hoped that the Deng Yan pastries would not disappoint.

While thinking, Nian Bing followed the road to the southern part of the city. The streets were still clamorous and busy, and all sorts of businesses littered the streets. When carts loaded with goods drew abreast of each other they blocked the traffic. Every time that happened, Ice Orchid City officials would come to help alleviate the situation; their actions were methodical and thorough. This trade city continued on steadily. Nian Bing watched everything around him and silently told himself that the next time he passed through Ice Orchid City into the Ice Moon Empire might be when he is headed to the Ice God's Pagoda to get revenge for his parents.

With a smile, Nian Bing continued walking. He did not know how long he had walked for but when he discerned his position, he had already reached the beginning of the southern part of the city.

When Nian Bing arrived at the southern part of city, his breath was uneven. He really wanted to shout “I hate big cities, why do I have to walk so far?” Nian Bing asked someone on the road where the Deng Yan Food Mansion was exactly and found the road that took him to his destination.

The entryway was much better decorated than the Orchid Fragrance Restaurant, but it seemed to be an open air restaurant. There was a gigantic eye in the middle of the decorated entryway. The suspended oval eye was one meter in diameter and was very eye-catching. On either side of the giant eye were the the words “Deng” and “Yan”.

It really has character! was Nian Bing’s first feeling. After he passed through the large doors, the feeling intensified. This was the first time he had seen such a restaurant; what lay before him was a giant garden without any awnings. The tables were spread very far apart, and the tables with guests sitting at them had large pots on top of them. And no matter how many guests there were, there would be an attendant next to the table, staring. The gazes of all the guests were on the pot, really keeping in line with the words Deng Yan. But why were they like that?

“Sir, have you come to eat Deng Yan food?” An attendant ran up to ask.

Nian Bing nodded and replied, “This is my first time coming here. Could you give me an introduction first?”

The attendant smiled and answered, “It is actually very simple. There is a special flavor inside our pots. We boil our soup stock for

a very long time. When you eat it, it is diluted with boiled water, and then we add liver, intestine, stomach, lung, meat slices, tofu, cabbage, as well as some other top-grade items. The best is the abalone. Each pot has an abalone fish, and if you want, we can add another one as long as you can grab it. Then we boil the ingredients on the stove underneath. One silver coin allows you to put your chopsticks in the pot ten times, but you cannot leave them in the boiling water. Whatever you grab is what you eat. We provide a sesame seed cake and soup free of charge. If your luck is good, you can obviously eat more food. If your luck is not good, then it is possible you will only get to eat cabbage ten times.”

Nian Bing looked at the server in shock and asked, “This really is something new. Please get me a pot, I would like to try.” Following the server, he sat down at an empty table. In a short while, the server came out carrying a stove, then put a large pot on top and turned on the heat.

The soup in the pot appeared light brown in color. A burst of fragrance assailed his senses, and through the smell, Nian Bing could discern that there were medicinal products as a base. Was medicinal cuisine popular in Ice Moon right now?

The broth in the pot gradually came to a boil. Nian Bing picked up the sesame seed cake in his left hand and his chopsticks in his right. He carefully scrutinized all of the ingredients in the boiling broth. There was more of the broth and relatively less ingredients in it. The temperature of the stove was very high; no wonder it was eaten open-air. If it was indoors, it would be harder to resolve the problem of temperature with these many stoves. Deng Yan food seemed like it required him to keep his eyes wide open.

In terms of visual power and hand precision, it would hard for even a martial artist to be superior to Nian Bing. With a flick of his wrist, his chopsticks jabbed into the pot like lightning, and the singular, small abalone in the pot was pinched between his chopsticks. Not minding the server's shocked expression, he blew on the steaming abalone and put into his mouth to chew.

The flavor was not as good as he imagined; it was barely passable. Nian Bing immediately determined that the reason Deng Yan Food could attract so many guests was mainly because it was new. If we were really talking about flavor, it could only be considered as old. The flavor of the medicinal herbs in the broth were not completely absorbed by the ingredients, and due to the fact that they were cooked in advance and that the heat control was standard, some of umami of the abalone was lost.

When Nian Bing had grabbed his eighth abalone and put it in his mouth, the attendant's face had turned extremely ugly. No wonder it was called Deng Yan Food; he had long been staring with wide eyes, but he still could not see Nian Bing's chopsticks clearly. How did he find the precious abalone from all of the other ingredients? It should be known that every time he put in an abalone, he would also stir the ingredients. Moreover, the abalone in the soup is extremely slippery and hard to grasp. However, it only took Nian Bing a moment to pick it up.

Fortunately, Nian Bing picked up a leaf of cabbage and a piece of red meat for his last two turns. If not, Deng Yan Food would've have turned into the Ten Abalone Feast. After drinking down a bowl of soup and eating the sesame seed cake, Nian Bing breathed in deeply and was relatively satisfied. He said to the server, "The flavor of the soup is better than the ingredients. The ingredients

were originally pretty good; it's just a pity that there is no heat control in this serving method, so naturally it would worsen. Let me give you some advice; the best thing to put in the soup is some ginger slices. Not only will it make the soup taste warmer, the flavor will also improve."

After saying that, he took no notice of the server's shocked gaze and put a silver coin on the table and stood to go.

Although the Deng Yan Food had not given Nian Bing too great of a surprise, he had some more comprehension of this kind of umami taste.

Leaving the city, Nian Bing took in a deep breath. Compared to the polluted air of the city, the air of the wilderness was much fresher. The sun hung high in the sky. At the present, it was close to noon. After trying the Deng Yan Foods, he was in extremely good spirits. With his destination as the capital of the Profound Orchid Empire, he set out.

When he was not far from the border of the Profound Orchid Empire, Nian Bing suddenly sensed a harsh, dense atmosphere. Silence fell on the surrounding forest; not even the birds made a noise.

What sort of situation could make him feel such a thing? He was slightly nervous and had already thought of a plan. An army; it could only be an army stationed nearby that would create such an environment. On top of that, the army here must have gone through an iron and blood trial to be able to emit such killing intent. It seems that the borders of Profound Orchid and Ice Moon

Empire are not as peaceful as imagined!

Just as he was thinking over this, he heard the sound of horse hooves. As the sound became clearer and clearer, Nian Bing could see a dust cloud materializing above the main road in the distance. The dust cloud traveled in a very straight line along the main road. Were these the cavalry soldiers? When he thought of cavalry, Nian Bing not only recalled that day from eight years ago—the first time he and his master went to Ice Snow City, the Silver Feather Cavalry had left a deep impression in his heart—but especially the auntie he had mistaken for his mother. She was so good-hearted, a really great mother!

The dust cloud approached. Nian Bing saw that this cavalry troop was lined up very neatly. In total, there were only ten riders, lined up in one line, each of them wearing identical black armor. Although it was not heavy armor, it looked like it was heavy. They made a mad rush at a high speed towards his location. The cavalry soldiers on their horses were each extremely lively and full of energy. They all did not wear helmets. The straight cloud of dust had risen up from the feet of their war horses. With all ten in a line, the cloud of dust was not disordered at all, so much so that each of the horses had exactly the same posture. It was obvious that this troop had trained for a very long time.

Nian Bing flashed to the side. He did not want to be misunderstood by this cavalry troop. Since the day he had left Ice and Snow City, he had told himself that he would not provoke trouble as much as possible. With less trouble, he would be better able to accomplish his goals.

If you did not provoke others, would others also not provoke you? Definitely not.

“Halt,” The head cavalryman shouted loudly, and the ten war horses’ front hooves simultaneously rose in the air then fell to the side. They who had been speeding along forcefully, stopped somewhere not far from Nian Bing. The head cavalry man had a head of fiery red hair and was much taller than Nian Bing. Because of his horse’s sudden stop, his armor rang resoundingly. He dismounted and walked up to Nian Bing.

“Little Brother, how far is it to Ice Orchid City?” The cavalryman’s tone was polite.

Nian Bing replied, “Not far. Along this road, with your speed, it will probably take less than an hour to get there.”

The cavalryman was suddenly somewhat suspicious when he saw Nian Bing’s gaze. “You came from that direction? Are you from the Ice Moon Empire?”

Nian Bing shook his head. He, of course, could not be certain of what the man was getting at, but there were not many people in the Ice Moon Empire who had golden hair. “No, I am from the Harmonic Flower Empire. If there is nothing else, I will continue on my way.”

When he heard the words Harmonic Flower Empire, there was a change in the cavalryman’s face. “Harmonic Flower Empire? Then you do not need to walk any further; you will come with us to Ice

Orchid City.”

Nian Bing was slightly dumbfounded. He asked, “Why?”

The cavalryman snorted coldly and said, “I am the captain of the Ice Moon Empire Steel Blood Cavalry Troop, Ao Mu. Right now, the Harmonic Flower Empire and Qi Lu Empire have formed an alliance and have sneaked an attack against the Profound Orchid Empire. We are returning to the Empire to report this news. At this time, you suddenly appeared so close to our two countries’ borders and are from the Harmonic Flower Empire. You must come with us to return. If we find out that you have no relation, then we will let you go.”

Chapter 46.1 - The Beginning Of War

Nian Bing frowned. “But I know nothing at all about a war. From what you said, it seems that it hasn’t been long since war broke out. I’ve always been in the Ice Moon Empire, so how could I know anything? I am definitely not a spy as you imagined.”

“Is that so? But not matter what, it’s better to wrongfully kill a thousand than to let one get away. We can talk again when we get to Ice Orchid City. If we discover that you truly aren’t a spy, then we won’t make any more trouble for you.”

Nian Bing replied coolly, “Go back with you? Let you take custody of me? Sorry, I have things that I need to do. If you insist on bringing me with you, please take a look at this first.” While saying this, he raised his right hand showing the badge with the emblem of the Mage Association on it.

When the cavalryman saw the badge that Nian Bing had taken out, he could not help but be dumbfounded. “A mage? You are a mage?”

Nian Bing said, “That is correct. I am a mage from the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association. I think that this badge is representative of that.”

The cavalry man hesitated for a moment, but shook his head. “We have left the empire for some time. Who knows where your badge could have come from. Please return with us; if we can confirm that this badge is real then we can speak again.”

Nian Bing's eyes grew cold. "So you're saying that you absolutely have to bring me back to Ice Orchid City? The dignity of a mage is not so easily trampled upon. I'm sorry, I cannot return with you."

The cavalry soldier smiled. "A mage? You're merely a mage from the Mage Association. Do you think that your identity is so noble? That might be so in other countries, but in the Ice Moon Empire, your Mage Association is just a minor power. Unless you have the insignia of the Ice God's Pagoda, even if your president was here, you would still need to come back with us."

When he heard this, Nian Bing finally understood why Long Zhi would compromise with him. The Ice Moon Empire Mage Association had such a low status that even a cavalry troop captain would hold them in disdain. How could distinguished people keep a good attitude towards the Association? Actually, it was also partially the cavalryman's fault for not looking clearly. If he knew that the emblem in Nian Bing's hands was the badge of an elder, he wouldn't talk so exaggeratedly. An elder meant that they were a magic scholar. He was only a swordmaster; if he were to challenge a magic scholar, wouldn't he be seeking death?

"Humiliating a mage is a shameful action; you will now pay the price." For the first time, Nian Bing took out both the Morning Dew Knife and the True Sun Knife and flipped their handles. Right now, the two unique, godly blades were showing their secondary effect, so they really should be called the Ice Goddess' Sigh and the Flame God's Roar.

The cavalry man snorted coldly and stomped his foot. Although

he wore armor, he wasn't slow in the slightest and reached out directly for Nian Bing.

A fireball the size of a fist was sent out from the Flame God's Roar. The light of the fire flickered and headed directly towards the cavalry man's hand. Instantly casting a rank 1 spell wasn't hard for Nian Bing at all, but a rank 1 spell could n't break the cavalry soldier's defense. However, could Nian Bing's attack be so simple? The answer is of course not. When the fireball appeared, the Ice Goddess' Sigh held in his left hand also created an ice cone. Due to its external form, the ice cone was well suited for aerial attacks. It followed behind the fireball; when the fireball came in contact with the man's hand, they collided together.

“Boom–” The sound of a large explosion was followed by a blood-curdling shriek. The cavalry man who had thought himself victorious had just lost his right hand, together with its armor due to the explosion. His hand had turned into ashes in the air. The baptism of ice and fire had forced him to take several step backwards until he fell on his butt onto the ground, twitching all over.

These days, Nian Bing had mostly come in contact with martial artists. He had always wondered how he could face off against warriors who specialized in close combat. Of course, magic scrolls were the best choice, but they were limited. There would be a day when he lost the protection of his magic scrolls, then what? So he started to do some research into magic. Since the day he had left Ice and Snow City, he had thought of a good strategy: to take advantage of the Ice and Fire Source to its fullest. The Ice and Fire Source is founded on the balance between ice and fire. To fully use the two opposite magics, he needed to use equal energy in creating

explosive power. This, he understood deeply. So when trying to fully employ the Ice and Fire Source, balancing the two magics' strength was his greatest headache. After he separated from Mao Mao, Nian Bing had suddenly thought of something. Does magic need to be of a higher rank in order to display greater strength? No, that was definitely not true. Since he possessed the special abilities of the Ice and Fire Source, if he could demonstrate even the ability of low rank magic, the effects would be similar to a high rank magic.

From that day on, Nian Bing had continued to experiment. Through experimentation, he discovered that low ranked magic with effects like the Ice and Fire Source was much easier than using high ranked spells. Especially right now, with him using the Ice Goddess' Sigh and the Flame God's Roar, he only needed to use a single rank 1 spell each while still keeping the balance. When the two rank 1 spells collide, they could produce a power that wasn't inferior to the rank 3 explosive flame spell. This kind of explosion was not much to a martial arts expert, but for a swordmaster it was more than enough, especially for an opponent who was making light of him.

The scariest thing was that after Nian Bing had succeeded with his research, he started to ponder over what Long Zhi had said to him about the special characteristics of ice and fire. It was just like when he was cooking; he needed to bring out the flavors of the food. The Ice and Fire Magic Source also needed the innate characteristics of ice and fire to be brought out before it would possess the true might of the Ice and Fire source.

When Mao Mao's father Xi La De had given him advice, Nian Bing was enlightened. He no longer pursued extensive magic, but

rather brought out smaller magic. If he could do it at a smaller scale and still be able to fully bring out the strength of his Ice and Fire magic, then large spells would have a much more explosive might.

That day, Nian Bing's first sacrificial victim for his research was Ru Yi. In order to hide his identity, Nian Bing had only used ice magic. If he had been the same as before, his snowstorm would only be enough to trouble Ru Yi and definitely wouldn't have been fatal. But on that day, he was different from his past self. The snowstorm had been full of the ice element's special characteristics; the strongest ice attribute ability was shown when he directly inserted the cold poison into Ru Yi's body, nearly claiming her life.

Today was Nian Bing's first time testing out his rank 1 Ice and Fire Source after he started his research. The explosive strength was enough to obliterate the cavalry soldier's hand. In the next instant, the two streams of ice and fire energy had entered the man's body under the force of Nian Bing's spiritual power. No matter whether it was ice first and fire second or if it were fire first and ice second, the feeling would definitely not be pleasant. The two extreme energies fusing together was much scarier than one of them. Right now, the captain's body was being permeated with both fire and ice poisons. Although it had only exploded off one hand, he had lost his ability to battle. In this first attack, Nian Bing had finally stepped through the gateway of Ice and Fire Source Magic.

When they saw the wounds of their captain, the other nine cavalymen rushed forward. Although they did not have the strength of a swordmaster, as one of the trump cards of the Ice

Moon Empire, the soldiers of the Iron Blood Cavalry Troop possessed the ability of advanced warriors. Especially with their cooperation, tempered through years of practice, they had gained silent understanding of one another. Their nine swords simultaneously attacked Nian Bing. Although they weren't at the level where they could emit qi, the synchronized attack of nine advanced warriors and their silent communications of their troop, could even make a great swordmaster helpless for a short time.

Sadly, the advanced warriors were not up against another warrior. A fight between warriors couldn't be compared with a fight between a mage and a warrior.

The amount of magic power that a rank 1 spell consumed was extremely little for an advanced mage. At the same time, it's biggest advantage was that it could be cast successively as it did not need a chant. Tens of fireballs shot out like bullets after receiving amplification from the Flame God's Roar. Nian Bing used this top-class flame attributed stone, not to cut down on magic power consumption, but rather to condense the magic much more strongly and increase the attack strength to fully bring out its power.

Just as a rank 1 fireball spell would be useless in the face of the swordmaster captain, the fireballs would be also be just as useless in the face of these advanced warriors. However, when there was an ice cone following the rank 1 fireball, everything would change.

As the creator of the technique, Nian Bing clearly grasped every variation of the fireball and ice cone. If it were a person who didn't understand magic, they would probably think that an Ice and Fire

Magic Source Mage at most would be equivalent to a similarly ranked ice mage combined with a similarly ranked fire mage, but that simply wasn't true.

When an ice mage encounters a fire mage, what would happen if each of them used the same amount of magic power to produce rank 1 spells that came in contact with one another? It was very simple; the two spells, because they were opposites, would cancel out. The special thing about Ice and Fire Source Mages is that for them, they could produce a change in this kind of situation. With spiritual power control, he could cause them to undergo a change. Right now, Nian Bing did just that and caused destruction.

The sound of tens of explosions were followed by countless clouds of dusts. The warhorses were startled and darted to the side. It was hard to accept, but these warhorses who had been trained for so long were of very high caliber. Although they had been startled, they still didn't run far. It was just a shame that their owners could no longer ride them. Blood and mangled limbs painted a wretched scene. None of them would ever see the sun rise again.

Nian Bing closed his eyes. He had never been afraid to kill people. Since the first time he had used ice and fire magic to kill Third Manager Liao, killing people was a liberating process. However, the scene before him was too bloody. Although he hadn't planned to leave any survivors when he took out the two unique, divine blades, his heart was currently heavy.

He turned to the distorted face of someone who didn't know why his body hurt so much or how his companions died and said coolly,

“Did you need to force me? Right now, do you still believe that mages are trash? Do you still look down on the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association?”

“N-no, are y-you a demon?” As the captain of a cavalry troop, his heart wasn’t weak, but he was unable to understand what had just happened that made his nine companions lose their lives.

“Yes, I am a demon. Towards the people I hate, I am a demon. They died, and you are their captain. They still need you to lead them in hell. Good bye.” While speaking, his line of sight travelled along the road. At the moment, maybe because it was noon or because of the intense atmosphere, there weren’t any passerbys on the road.

The red fireballs and the blue ice cones plummeted from the sky, exploding at the same time as they took the final life. Nian Bing didn’t linger and rose in the air on a snowstorm, heading for a distant place. Nian Bing discovered that killing people had become even easier for him. It seemed that the identity of the Magic Reaper had gradually invaded his personality. This time, in terms of his magic research it had no doubt been a success. And in terms of something that affected his freedom, he definitely wouldn’t be lenient. However, he did n’t know that because of his actions now, the Ice Moon Empire learned of the war several days late, making the losses of the Profound Orchid Empire disastrous. As such, a deep rift formed between the two countries’s good relationship.

Flying in the air, Nian Bing worked hard to recall the scenes where he had killed people before. The first time was with Third Mangera Liao. Third Manager Liao was completely suppressed by

his magic. He didn't care at all, but the scene of blood and flesh splattering had left a deep impression on him. He was also a normal person. A feeling of melancholy gripped his chest. Resisting the ill feeling, Nian Bing turned his thoughts to the uses of magic.

The true Ice and Fire Magic Source was able to show such a good effect because of their special characteristics. However, if he didn't take out his two unique, divine blades, without the Flame God's Roar and the Ice Goddess' Sigh, he couldn't bring out its full potential. With his understanding of fire and ice magic, the two precious stones' true strength was gradually showing. Their biggest advantage was that using the same amount of magic power, they could produce a totally different strength. This was more reflected with higher ranked spells. The two precious stones seemed as if they could absorb the magic element from the air, as if their energy was limitless. Especially now that they were imbedded in the knife, it felt like they had been able to do it more strongly.

Chapter 46.2 - The Beginning Of War

If he were to cast the rank 1 magics of the Ice and Fire Source without powerful magic tools, the most power he could reach would be primary stage of rank 3. But after using the two magic tools, when the spells exploded the spells drew close to rank 4 in strength. Of course, there was another reason why he could easily kill a swordmaster and nine advanced warriors: they underestimated him. After all, the Ice and Fire Source was not something just anyone could understand.

Pondering over the mysteries of magic, Nian Bing's nausea gradually disappeared. Before, when he killed Third Manager Liao, he told himself that when there was an obstacle in the way of his progress, destroying the enemy was the simplest solution. So he couldn't be lenient. Even when using magic he didn't have the slightest hesitation; it seemed the hatred in his heart had let loose a massacre.

Just as he was flying, Nian Bing's heart suddenly stopped. Unconsciously, he raised his head and saw three mages floating above the road he had to take. Each of them wielded a magic staff. Currently, their ill gazes were focused on him. Each was wearing a different colored magic robe – red, blue, and green, and all three bore an insignia on their chest. The mage wearing a green magic robe was like him, a great mage. The other two were only advanced mages. He steadied his heart and firmly believed that with his Ice and Fire Source Magic, handling these three mages wouldn't be too big of a problem, so he might as well face them.

As Nian Bing came within thirty feet of the mages, he couldn't help but take a deep breath of cold air. Because he saw an army

camp; as far as the eye could see, there was an army camp. There must have been at least one hundred thousand soldiers garrisoned here! The three mages were stationed on a short hill, so he didn't see them before. Currently, he felt the harsh aura directed towards him. Could it be that they were an army from the Ice Moon Empire? No, not possible. He was already in Profound Orchid Empire. Based on the state of this camp, it seemed that they had been organized here very methodically. That cavalryman had already said that the Harmonic Flower-Qi Lu alliance had already attacked the Profound Orchid Empire. It seems that the troop stationed here must be providing support; their original goal should have been to defend the Ice Moon Empire.

“Halt.” The head wind mage raised his magic staff against Nian Bing. Nian Bing manipulated his snowstorm to a standstill. He deliberately asked in surprise, “What is happening here?”

Seeing the snowstorm condensed beneath Nian Bing, the wind mage asked in a deep voice, “You are an ice mage?”

Nian Bing nodded. “That is correct. I am from the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association; I was planning on heading to your esteemed country's capital. I don't know what is going on here?”

The wind mage's eyebrows wrinkled slightly. “Currently, our country's army is in the middle of advancing. In order to avoid any unneeded trouble, please advance with us. Is the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association any good, hasn't it long since declined? Seeing your appearance, you must be an advanced mage. Since you're so young and already an advanced mage, staying in the Ice Moon Empire does not give you many prospects.”

Nian Bing's heart was electrified. What should he do now? Should he go with them, or refuse them and probably get attacked like before? Relying on the strength of his Ice and Fire Source Magic, he was certain that he could attack them while they were still chanting. However, he reckoned that they had some defensive magic scrolls on them. In case they delayed him, it would be extremely disadvantageous. After all, there were one hundred thousand soldiers here! Even if everyone spat out a mouthful of spit, it was enough to drown him. Master once said that for any country, if there was an army that surpassed over ten thousand soldiers, there must be a strong person among them. When he remembered this, the smile on his face became more amicable. "You three mages, may I ask what will happen to me if I come with your army?"

The wind attribute mage said, "Relax. We won't make so much trouble for you. After the army sets out on their journey, then we will naturally let you go. Of course, you need to show that you have the badge of your country's mage association."

Nian Bing secretly thought that with the current level of his snowstorm, if he started to run away at full speed, they would be helpless to chase after him. Just as he got this idea, ten mages flew upwards out of the main section of the Profound Orchid Army. Most of them were wind mages. It was very obvious they used the soaring wind spell, capable of short flights. Never mind about running then with this many mages. He did not want to seek death. Nian Bing nodded to the wind mage and said amiably, "Okay, I will definitely come with you."

The three mages led Nian Bing onto the hill. Nian Bing took out

his mage badge, but this time he took out his advanced mage emblem. Several days before he had left Ice and Snow City, Long Zhi had told him that in the Ice Moon Empire he should show his elder badge so he could gain more respect and things would go more smoothly. But when he was outside of the Ice Moon Empire, he should show his advanced mage badge. After all, Nian Bing was too young. Being an advanced mage would attract less attention.

Long Zhi had told him, that right now, it seemed there was peace between the great empires, but in reality, there wasn't a single empire that didn't want to gobble up the other empires. Even the Profound Orchid Empire that had good relations with the Ice Moon Empire had this thought. So, he definitely couldn't get caught up within these politics. He was to stay away as far as possible, since war would break out sooner or later.

Currently, the war had already broke out. From a standpoint of strength, the strongest empires of the five great empires on the continent were the Profound Orchid Empire and the Harmonic Flower Empire. Because the Ice Moon Empire had the sole descended god, the Ice Goddess' Worshipper, they were in an exceedingly powerful position. If any country wanted to move against them, they needed to think about the terrifying descended god spell. Out of the other four empires, the Harmonic Flower Empire was the only one that didn't show respect to the Ice Goddess' Worshipper because they had the strongest fire mage corps. Relying on their three fire magisters as well as their large quantity of magic scholars and great mages, their strength was only slightly less than the Ice God's Pagoda.

Nian Bing was very clear on the strength of the Harmonic Flower Empire's military. When he was small, he heard his father say that

the Harmonic Flower Empire's Flame Lion Cavalry was the number one cavalry on the continent. They were the only cavalry to pair mages with a cavalry. He didn't know whether they were participating in the conflict this time, but with the strength of the Qi Lu Empire, they were definitely not someone the Profound Orchid Empire could contend with.

What was war? Nian Bing didn't really know, but he knew that his original course of action had changed. A war wouldn't be advantageous for him.

After recognizing Nian Bing's Association badge, he nodded his head. With a smile, he said, "As expected, you are from the Ice Moon Empire. But since seeing your badge, you're not a member of the Ice God's Pagoda."

Nian Bing sighed and replied, "I am Nian Bing, part of the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association. As you probably know, the situation of our Association isn't very good. I've been entrusted by someone to deliver a letter to your esteemed country. Is this okay? Why is your distinguished country's troops engaged in such a large scale movement?" He obviously knew the answer to his question, but he had to play it smart.

The wind mage smiled and replied, "Our president and President Long have had the pleasure of meeting before. We are very sympathetic to your esteemed association's current situation. With the presence of the Ice God's Pagoda, any country's mage association wouldn't have a good time. According to what I've heard, your present situation is extremely terrible! It seems you do not even receive properly allocated funds from the royal family."

Nian Bing nodded and said, “The situation is definitely not good, and there are many reasons that led to the gradual decline of our association. There isn’t anything we can do either; with the lack of a country’s support and the depletion of our mage association’s resources, we will never have an opportunity to come back. Because of that, our president is very anxious.”

The wind mage did not have a very high status. He looked around forty or fifty years old. A layer of faint green light covered him. His looks were very ordinary, but his gaze was extremely sharp. His biggest feature was a red birthmark between the center of his eyebrows. He looked at Nian Bing and said, “My name is Sang Jie. This is what we call ‘Trees die when moved, humans move to live.’ Have you ever thought about changing your situation? The Ice Moon Empire Royal Family, because of the Ice God’s Pagoda, haven’t placed much importance on you. If you can’t change now, then you can’t change later. If President Long wishes, I think that our Profound Orchid Empire Mage Association would be very willing to admit you as members. You probably know that our Profound Orchid Empire Mage Association is primarily made of wind mages. Your esteemed association president is a wind magister. Our president has said many times that if he could work together with President Long, he would be extremely honored.”

Nian Bing smiled. Although the Ice Moon Empire had declined, it still had over one hundred mages and the top magic expert Long Zhi. It would be very normal of other associations to try to rope them in. “Great Mage Sang Jie, it would probably very hard. As you know, your distinguished country and our empire have good relationships. If our association were to move, then it might have an effect on the country’s relationship.”

Sang Jie smiled and replied, “You don’t need to worry about those things. I hope that when you return to you can bring up this matter with President Long. If he wants to, then we have a way.”

Seeing the other party’s vague smile, Nian Bing felt that the relationships between countries were full of subtleties. However, he thought that the proposal wasn’t very likely to succeed. If Long Zhi wanted to leave the Ice Moon Empire, why hasn’t he left yet? Because he was extremely unwilling to part with the mage association that he had founded! “Okay, when I get back I will tell the president about it. Thank you for your good intentions.”

Sang Jie shifted his gaze to the Profound Orchid Empire that was hurriedly yet orderly setting out. “The continent isn’t peaceful at all. The Harmonic Flower Empire and the Qi Lu Empire alliance launched an attack against our country. I don’t know what they were thinking. Could it be that the Harmonic Flower Empire isn’t worried about them getting attacked by the Lang Mu Empire, who they are on bad terms with?”

“You’re going to fight?” Nian Bing asked in surprise, “You are heading to a battlefield?”

Sang Jie nodded. “We have already told your Ice Moon Empire cavalry who were left here to defend this place to go back to your country and report. Right now, the entire Profound Orchid Empire is assembling its strength and heading to the battlefield. Fortunately, the Harmonic Flower Empire didn’t send out their elite Flame Lion Cavalry, but I heard that currently that tens of cities near the border have fallen into enemy hands. The details of

the situation won't be known till we reach the frontlines."

Nian Bing asked curiously, "How many soldiers are participating in the battle now?"

Sang Jie answered, "Not just a few. The Harmonic Flower-Qi Lu alliance totals four hundred thousand. Their army is travelling on three different routes into our territory. If it weren't for the enemy being so excessively powerful, we wouldn't have to dispatch these defending soldiers back. The Harmonic Flower Empire has always had a good relationship with the Qi Lu Empire, while always being mortal enemies with the Ice Moon Empire and the Lang Mu Empire. I really don't understand why they have chosen our country instead of the Lang Mu Empire."

Nian Bing lowered his head and said, "I don't understand one whit about war, however I believe that the aggressors mustn't get away with this."

Sang Jie turned to give Nian Bing a look. He discovered that the handsome youth looked very shy. He couldn't help but have a more favorable impression of him. He smiled and replied, "Do not worry. There won't be a problem. Your Ice Moon Empire wouldn't just watch our country get destroyed by Harmonic Flower and Qi Lu. If not, they would use our country as a springboard, and then your country would be out of luck. The Lang Mu Empire specializes in defense, not in offense. They would be unable to pose a real threat to Harmonic Flower and Qi Lu. However, there has always been a deep enmity between your empire's Ice God's Pagoda and the Harmonic Flower Empire's Flame Ancestor. The Flame Ancestor holds a position equivalent to the royal family in the

Harmonic Flower Empire. If it weren't for our Profound Orchid Empire and Lang Mu Empire laid between them, perhaps Harmonic Flower and Ice Moon would already have fought each other to death."

When he heard the two words 'Fire Ancestor,' Nian Bing's muscles couldn't help but twitch. He did not say anymore and just waited for the army to leave with the Profound Orchid Empire's three mages.

One hundred thousand troops departed majestically on the winding turns of the road. The cavalry was situated at the very back. The heavy cavalry troop and the light cavalry troop set off, leaving the camp deserted.

Sang Jie handed Nian Bing a whirlwind-shaped emblem. "When the war has ended, even if your President Long does not wish to enter our association, you are welcome to come to the capital and find me, and I can give you an assignment. Okay, we are leaving. Oh, that's right. If you're going to the capital, the next city on the way is Crow Orchid City. I recommend that you do not go there. If the letter you are delivering is not urgent, then it would be best to not go to the capital temporarily. Right now, the war has made everyone nervous, so the guard near the capital has become extremely strict. As a foreign mage, you won't be very welcome there. So I propose that you first go to Orchid Dream City, not far from Crow Orchid City, and wait there for some time. It would best for you to wait until the war is over and do as you planned. Because Orchid Dream City is far from the front lines, we call it the paradise of our Profound Orchid Empire. There are our country's most highly ranked warrior institutions and magic colleges. If you have time you could go take a look. Okay, I'm sure that we will

meet again one day. Mighty wind! Share your freedom with me and lead the free wind of heaven and earth so that we may grow wings for flight. Send us away from the noise, away from all worries.”

At the completion of the chant, his ordinary magic staff dispersed a strong green light. Not only did it cloak himself, but also the other two wind mages. Under the support of the green light, their speed suddenly increased. They left the hillside behind and actually seemed to have sprouted wings made of wind. They glided to where the majority of the army had gone. Seeing their figures, Nian Bing could not help but feel cold. Sang Jie’s magic level was higher than what he had imagined. The wind wing spell was a rank 6 support magic, but for it to be used on three people required more magic power than that of a rank 6 spell. From his appearance, he should soon be entering the realm of a magic scholar. His proposal was made in good will. Although it was meant to entice him, according to what he had said, right now wasn’t a good time to visit the capital of the Profound Orchid Empire.

Chapter 47.1 - Orchid Dream College

He took out a map from his space ring and carefully checked his position. Nian Bing saw, that just as Sang Jie said, Orchid Dream City was nearby Crow Orchid City. If he were to directly pass to the capital of the Profound Orchid Empire, Profound Orchid City, he would need to pass through Crow Orchid City which was the shortest route. If he were to go through Orchid Dream City, he would need to make a detour. However, in order to avoid the war, going to Orchid Dream City was definitely the best choice. Anyway, Luo Rou's marriage was going to take place two years later. There was plenty of time, so he might as well stop by Orchid Dream City for a while. He could use this time to cultivate his magic, as well as deepen his understanding of culinary arts. By exchanging pointers with Ming Hui, Nian Bing had gained some insight into Wrapping Noodles with Water Mysterious Jade Hand. Although the Mysterious Jade Hand was created by practicing in a special way that he couldn't copy, with his control over the fire element, the heat wouldn't affect him too much. With more practice, he could definitely produce an effect almost like Wrapping Noodles with Water. So Orchid Dream City, he would go to Orchid Dream City.

After thinking over his plan, Nian Bing put away the map. He recited the chant for the snowstorm and left the hillside. There was no sign of human life on the road from Ice Orchid City to Orchid Dream City. Nian Bing had a map this time so he didn't travel along the big roads and found a different path instead. He attempted to use the snowstorm for a longer flight, but the snowstorm wasn't a wind spell. He tried his hardest, but he could only fly just over two hours. Despite this, a two hour flight was equivalent to walking for two days. Nian Bing discovered that this was a good way to train his magic. It didn't just have a small

positive influence on raising his magic power, so he might as well abandon his legs and just use the snowstorm. Every time his magic was about to run out, he found a secluded place to stay. With his magic scrolls as protection, he would then recover his magic power, then continue on his journey.

With the speed of the snowstorm, three days later, he finally arrived at his destination—Orchid Dream City.

Orchid Dream City was already in sight. Perhaps because it was Profound Orchid Empire's garden, but there wasn't that much defense. The city walls were not high, only ten meters. The defense here and the defense of Ice and Snow City couldn't be spoken of in one breath. The city gates were wide open; there weren't many people passing through, and there were only four Profound Orchid Empire soldiers guarding the gates.

There wasn't much difference between people of the Profound Orchid Empire and people of the Ice Moon Empire. They were just slightly shorter in stature, and their hair was mainly blue, purple, or black. Blue-haired people in the Profound Orchid Empire wasn't any different than the Ice Moon Empire, and golden hair like his was just as rare. Nian Bing strode to Orchid Dream City. Since he decided that he would stay here until the war had ended, he wanted to find a good quality yet cheap hotel.

While thinking over this, Nian Bing arrived at the entrance of Orchid Dream City. The guards didn't give him any hassle because of his golden hair. They didn't even give him a second glance and just let him enter. When he entered Orchid Dream City, he immediately sensed something peculiar. The entire city seemed to

enveloped in a peaceful air. It was close to noon, and there weren't many people on the streets, but he could see their comfortable and content smiles on their faces.

“Little Brother, have you come to register?” Nian Bing had just found a street lined with inns, when an unfamiliar voice came from behind him. He turned to look, only to see a thirty-ish year old man looking right at him. He was petite in build, and the smile on his face looked obscene. He did not wait for Nian Bing to say anything, and immediately pressed him forward and said, “It looks like you are from out-of-town. So you definitely must have come to our Orchid Dream City to study. What do you want to study? Do you want to study martial arts? That stuff is too plebeian. If you ever joined the army, war is merciless. It would be good to learn a survival skill so you can have it your whole life!”

Nian Bing smiled and asked, “So if you come to Orchid Dream City you can learn anything?”

The middle aged man went blank for a moment, then said, “Could it be that you haven't come here to learn? For someone as young as you to come to Orchid Dream City as an outsider, I can't think of any reason why you would want to come here other than to study. Orchid Dream City is also called the college city. That is not just an empty name. We have colleges for every kind of profession here in Orchid Dream City, particularly the continent's only comprehensive college, which is also the biggest educational establishment in the entire continent. It is a bit expensive to study there, but you can learn anything you want there. Youngsters should learn many things while they are young. It will be hard to study once you enter society.”

The phrase college city piqued Nian Bing's interest. "So what can you learn at the comprehensive college here?"

The middle-aged man rubbed his hands. His tiny eyes showed the expression of his target taking the bait. Although it was a fleeting emotion, Nian Bing caught it. "Little Brother, the most famous place in our Orchid Dream City is the Orchid Dream College. It is the comprehensive college that I just told you about. It has dozen of departments for the most popular industries, each with a very strong faculty. Every industry is different, and so is their tuition. What's more, you can't just get in with money; you also have to pass a test. If you can obtain a diploma from the Orchid Dream College, then you can find work for yourself on any corner of the continent. Of course, the entrance exam is difficult. If you cannot pass the exam then don't be nervous; our Orchid Dream City has many smaller colleges that offer a wide range of different industries. It isn't terrible in comparison to Orchid Dream City, and the schools fees are also lower. Sometimes, Orchid Dream College faculty will teach some classes at the smaller colleges. So, do you have an interest in a profession?"

When he heard this, Nian Bing could not help but think of the time when he had just come to Ice Snow City, and Xue Jing asked him which culinary school he had graduated from. He found himself saying, "Is there a culinary college in Orchid Dream City?"

"Culinary arts?" When the middle-aged man heard those two words, he blanked out. He didn't think that the imposing and handsome youth in front of him would have interest towards one of the lowest-ranked professions on the continent. However, he responded very quickly, his blank stare lasting only for a moment. He hastened to say, "Of course, of course we have one. Chefs are a

very plebeian profession. You want to study culinary arts? No problem. In our college city, there is nothing that we don't teach. As such, Little Brother, would you like me to give you a recommendation? Whether it be Orchid Dream College or an plebeian small college, I have all the connections."

Nian Bing smiled and replied, "Then I will trouble you to give me a referral to Orchid Dream College."

The middle-aged man hehe'd and said, "This is easy, this is easy. As a plebeian profession, the fee is relatively low. However, that's your own thing. Only you can pass the exam. If your marks are extremely good, you might even get free tuition. However, the referral..." When he said this, he rubbed his hands.

When the middle-aged man started to talk to Nian Bing about colleges, Nian Bing already understood what the man was doing. However, he had just arrived here and was unfamiliar with everything. It was advantageous for him to listen to his narration. At the moment, when he saw the other show his true colors, he could not help but say, "The referral fee is not a problem. I just want you to help me participate in taking the exam. Only, does the Orchid Dream College accept new students anytime? So it doesn't have any special rules."

The middle-aged man answered, "Of course it doesn't. The Orchid Dream College is special. No matter which faculty it is, you can take the test at any time. As long as you pass the exam, the faculty advisor will assign you to the appropriate grade level to continue your studies. The culinary faculty seems to be divided into five grades. However, there is something I must mention to

you. To test into the Orchid Dream College, you must have a foundation in a profession. If not, it will be very hard for you to pass the test. As for the referral fee, one gold coin is enough. It is a very cheap price. If you have my recommendation, you can take the test today. How about that?"

"One gold coin? You might as well be robbing me," said Nian Bing in displeasure. He had spent one gold coin for his entire Sky Spring Pavilion kitchenware set. This middle-aged man was too much like a lion's gaping maw.

The middle-aged man hehe'd. "My fee is very reasonable; my service is definitely valuable. If you do not have my referral, you will need to wait till ten people have gathered before you can take the entrance examination. Every day you delay, aren't you learning less things? Okay, if it's like that, then let's say me meeting you at the city gate was destiny. I will give you a twenty percent discount. This should be cheap enough."

Nian Bing laughed. "Cheap? Eight silver coins is nothing to the son of a rich family, but can't you see the way am I dressed? Do I like the son of a rich family? What's more, the sons of rich family probably don't learn cooking. One silver coin, this is the price I am willing to pay. I would rather wait for ten people first."

"One silver coin? Boy, you are too stingy." When he heard how little Nian Bing would pay, the middle-aged man's attitude immediately changed. He had gone from calling him little brother to boy.

Nian Bing said calmly, "You only need to put in a few good words

for me; one silver coin for a bit of talk is not little. If you do not want it, then that's fine. I will go myself."

The middle-aged man rolled his eyes, showing his disdain. "Fine. One silver coin is a silver coin. However, I must first say that I am only responsible for getting you there. If you cannot pass the examination, or you don't have money to pay the school fees, then it's not my problem. I will not return the money to you. Let's go, follow me." He walked along the road to the city.

Nian Bing really cared about money? Of course not, he just wanted to spend his money on things that were worth it. A culinary college was not bad. If he could learn something there, then not only did he find somewhere to stay, he might be able to advance to a higher level of cooking. He would spend night time cultivating his magic. That was truly the best decision. Thinking this, he couldn't help but rejoice that he had come to this city. Right now, he just hoped that Orchid Dream College was really like the middle-aged man had said: suited to the appetite of number one college in the continent.

Maybe it was because Nian Bing had offered too little money, but the middle-aged man didn't bother to argue with him more about the fee. He led him through many winding turns deeper into Orchid Dream City. While walking, Nian Bing observed his surroundings. Very quickly he discovered that even if the middle-aged man was greedy, he had not lied. He had already seen no less than ten signs for colleges on the road. Although they did not look very big, they really included every kind of profession, including blacksmithing, magic, martial arts, politics, tailoring, business, etc. There were even schools for relatively small professions. The areas next to the schools were the more bustling part of Orchid

Dream City. He saw some youngsters wearing identical clothing walking along the road. Their clothes were very obviously emblazoned with the name of their school.

They walked from the north of the city to the west of the city when the middle-aged man finally stopped. “We have arrived; this is the place.” Nian Bing followed his pointing finger. He didn’t see a signboard for a school. It was a very plebeian, mid-sized restaurant. The words Ru Family Restaurant were on the front. There wasn’t even a single person at the restaurant.

“Here? You are not mistaken, this is a college?” Nian Bing asked with dissatisfaction.

The middle-aged man snorted and said unpleasantly, “Idiot. Who would directly bring you to the college. If you don’t pass the exam, then there’s no point for you to go to the college. This is the site of the Orchid Dream College culinary exam. Go in, but first give me the referral fee. I will let you take the exam.”

Nian Bing fished out a silver coin and tossed it to the middle-aged man. He was not afraid that this obscene guy would act too shamelessly. After all, he didn’t have the strength of an advanced rank warrior like the Iron Blood Cavalry.

The middle-aged man caught the silver coin and put it into his chest somewhat dissatisfied. “Follow me.” He spoke neither coldly nor warmly, and headed for the Ru Family Restaurant first.

Upon entering the restaurant, Nian Bing found that it was

slightly more lively than he had imagined. The restaurant was one hundred-some square meters. The fifty, sixty tables were half full. The waiters shuttled across the room without any breaks. Their business seemed to be pretty good.

The middle-aged man led Nian Bing over to the counter. A girl stood behind the counter. She wasn't tall, only coming up to Nian Bing's chest. She wore a tailored blue shirt and pants without much adornment. Her long blue hair was combed into a fat braid that hung behind her. She was bent over an abacus, seeming to be settling accounts.

"Miss Meng, hello, I have brought a new student." The middle-aged man smiled at the girl behind the counter.

The girl raised her head. When Nian Bing saw her appearance, his heart was immediately overcome with a breathtaking feeling. This girl in blue had a pair of large, violet eyes. Her gaze was very calm, somewhat cold. Although she wasn't tall, she wasn't as well-developed as Xue Jing, but she did have an unworldly air. When she saw the middle-aged man, the coldness in her purple eyes became more severe. "What are you doing here? Haven't you been always dragging people to the martial arts college recently? How come you have time to come over here today."

The middle-aged man pointed to Nian Bing next to him. "Miss Meng, it's like this. Today I met this boy at the city gates. He wanted to enter college to study culinary arts, so I brought him here."

Chapter 47.2 - Orchid Dream College

Miss Meng raised her head to look at Nian Bing; her cold, lifeless eyes seemed to be devoid of any emotion. “Him? Shouldn’t you bring him to the cosmetics faculty? There are many beautiful girls there, so he could probably entice one. He wouldn’t need to test at all to get into the college. We don’t accept trash here, so please take him away.”

The middle-aged man laughed and replied, “I also thought that he wasn’t chef material, but I already brought him here. Since you won’t accept him, then we no longer have a relationship with each other. Boy, don’t blame me. If you have the talent, then persuade Miss Meng yourself as she is responsible for the test here.” After saying this, the middle-aged man turned to leave, not giving Nian Bing the chance to respond.

Nian Bing didn’t care about that man that much. It was enough that he brought him here. The cold and elegant Miss Meng piqued Nian Bing’s curiosity. Based on her looks, Nian Bing could tell that the Orchid Dream College has some skill. She had a pair of slender hands; her fingernails were trimmed very neatly. She didn’t wear any jewelry on her arms. When she was fiddling with the abacus, her fingers were extremely dextrous. These were definitely the hands a high-class chef would have.

Miss Meng looked at Nian Bing standing there and couldn’t help but frown. “Didn’t you hear what I said? You can leave now. Don’t stand there blocking my view; why are you so tall?”

Nian Bing smiled. “Being tall isn’t my mistake. That person said

that as long as he brought me here I would be able to take the exam. I still haven't tested yet, so I can't leave."

Miss Meng snorted and said, "Lemme teach you something. That guy just now is called Liao San'er, a famous good for nothing in the city. By chance he happened to save our college's president's life. The president carelessly agreed to allow him to introduce students to faculties and they wouldn't need to wait for ten people to start the examination. No one knew that he would actually take the chance so seriously and collect a high referral fee. You must've spent quite a bit of money, but your money was in vain. From now on, don't believe people so easily; take this as a lesson."

Nian Bing smiled slightly and replied, "A silver coin for a lesson is not cheap! Since this Liao San'er has the permission of the president, then I should be able to take the test!"

Miss Meng said coolly, "Your test has already ended, so you can go. We don't take in incompetents here. Even if you studied for five years, you won't have any results. Although a chef might be a lowly profession, not just anyone can become one."

Nian Bing burst out laughing in his heart. Even if he hadn't reached the pinnacle of culinary arts, he couldn't be incompetent. He asked curiously, "Miss Meng, could you tell me how you tested me that you were able to determine that I was not chef material?"

Miss Meng was already slightly impatient. She said coldly, "It's very simple. Your hands. Although your clothing is plain, the innate characteristic of a person won't change so easily. Moreover, your hands show no sign of undergoing physical labor. As a grown

man wearing a ring, do you think you're handsome? In my eyes you are just an idiot who knows nothing of culinary arts. I believe that you have potential in a profession where looks are more emphasized. Leave this place; I don't welcome students like you."

Nian Bing looked at his hands. He knew that this Miss Meng had already written him off as a pleasure-seeking son of rich parents, and there was no use explaining at the present. He could only use his ability as proof. "Miss Meng, no matter how you say it, I've already spent one silver coin to buy a chance for this test. If you make me leave like this, I definitely will not give up. You will see if I'm good or not; just give me a chance, and let me try making something."

Miss Meng looked at Nian Bing with some surprise. She had not believed him to be this tenacious. "No need for you to do something as troublesome as making a dish. Do you see those cold veggies over there? If you can sell them all within an hour, it will be proof of your ability as a chef. You can improve the cold veggies as you wish. Of course, they must be edible."

Nian Bing followed Miss Meng's finger to another countertop not far away. The countertop was covered with a dozen plates of cold veggies wrapped under a clear gauze. These were not ordinary plates, but large trays. It looked like every tray of veggies held the equivalent of over ten regular plates. As such, every person in the restaurant needed to buy at least three plates of veggies in order to sell every last one. To sell these in an hour would obviously be difficult. With a smile, Nian Bing did not say any more, but walked over to the bucket on the side of the counter to wash his hands clean. He silently went behind the cold veggies counter.

A young chef stood behind the countertop. Naturally, he had heard what Miss Meng said. When he saw Nian Bing approaching, he made an inviting gesture and moved to the side while making an expression like he was watching something entertaining.

It was easy to see the style of the cold veggies. Nian Bing took out his chopsticks and tried each one and started to plan for his marketing strategy. First, he chose a plate of cucumber salad. He directly picked up the large tray and took it out from under the wraps, placing it on the counter there, and then looked at the chef standing off to the side. “Do you have a kitchen knife?”

The chef was stunned for a moment, then replied, “These are cold veggies, not hot foods. What are you going to do with a kitchen knife?” He couldn’t believe that the youth with a handsome mien before him seemed to be younger than him.

Nian Bing smiled and replied, “If you don’t have a kitchen knife, then how can I sell? Please give me a knife. If I can’t sell them all within the hour, then I will leave myself.”

“Give him a knife,” said Miss Meng. The young chef made a sound of agreement, and went to the back of the kitchen. In a moment, he came out with a kitchen knife.

Taking the knife, Nian Bing flipped it in his hand. He spread out the cucumber on the plate with a spoon, then placed his finger along the back of the knife. He placed his finger tip on the blade of the knife, while gripping the blade handle with his middle, ring, and little fingers. The wide tip wasn’t suited to show off his skills, but he wasn’t thinking about exposing his magic right now, so he

could only do this. He turned to look at Miss Meng. Right now, she was watching him, but her gaze lacked the contempt from before. Instead, she was serious. It seemed like that she had already gleaned something from the way he gripped the knife.

“Jade Dream Cucumber, does anyone want any?” asked Nian Bing, raising his voice to a shout. The silence in the restaurant was immediately broken, and all of the customers looked in his direction, mostly with disgust. However, very soon their expressions turned to surprise because of the movements of the knife in Nian Bing’s hand. The wide bladed knife in Nian Bing’s hand seemed to dance; the knife tip revolved like a spinning top. There were no bones in his wrist as it flexed and conformed to any position he wanted. The cold cucumber on the tray didn’t make a mess at all, but the originally rhombus shaped cucumbers began to change form.

What were Jade Dream Cucumbers? It was very simple; it was when cucumbers all transformed into the character meng (梦). The fragments of the cucumbers were adroitly gathered to the side as the original shape of the cucumber changed. Nian Bing’s hand was exceedingly steady without the slightest shaking, but all the cucumbers had turned into the character meng. The knife in his hands was extremely controlled. Though the characters weren’t exactly the same in some places, for now it was enough.

The the guest closest to the cucumber counter saw most clearly, but the movements of the knife in Nian Bing’s hand was enough to attract attention. A medium-built middle-aged man walked over up to the counter. When he saw what the cucumbers had been transformed into, his jaw dropped in surprise. This was no longer in the category of culinary talent, but a masterpiece. It was not

something an ordinary person like him could understand.

Nian Bing's knife stopped, and he smiled. "Do you want a plate? One silver coin"

The middle-aged man was stunned. "A silver coin? Have you made a mistake? It's usually three bronze coins for a plate, but it's double the price?"

Nian Bing said confidently, "Do you not think that this meng character is worth one silver coin?"

The middle-aged man gave Nian Bing a thumbs up. "It's worth it. Youngster, your knife skills are truly a divine art! Give me a plate. One silver coin is one silver coin."

Nian Bing smiled and scooped out a plate's worth of cucumber. He pointed at the counter and said, "Please give the money to Miss Meng. Is there anyone else who would like some Jade Dream Cucumber?"

Guests sitting at the nearby tables had stood up. Even if they didn't want to buy, their curiosity was aroused by what was happening. When they saw each meng shaped cucumber, they couldn't help but be stunned. It seemed that his mysterious and divine knife arts had made each of them open up their purses to buy a plate. As Nian Bing was continuing to sell the Jade Dream Cucumbers he made, Miss Meng appeared in front of him.

“Okay, no need to sell anymore. Is the Brocade Character Void Lattice only worth a silver coin?” Miss Meng looked at Nian Bing with a complicated expression as she prevented him from selling all of the cucumbers.

Nian Bing smiled and set down the knife. “Do you still think that I am a culinary arts fool? Have I passed the test?”

Miss Meng nodded and replied, “Come with me. Everyone, sorry. This is a new member of our culinary faculty. I must trouble everyone to continue eating.” After she said this, she brought Nian Bing to the back.

Passing through the bustling kitchen, Miss Meng directly brought Nian Bing into the back courtyard. “Where did you learn your brocade character void lattice?” Miss Meng’s tone was urgent.

Nian Bing said, “An elderly person taught me. I don’t know his name, and after passing knife techniques to me for several days, he left.”

Miss Meng’s already large eyes grew even wider. “What did you say? Only a couple of days? Do you take me for an idiot; for an ordinary person to train in the Brocade Character Void Lattice without a famous master, even if they practiced for a dozen years they would not be able to be successful. So who did you learn your knife arts from?”

Nian Bing said coolly, “Miss Meng, don’t you feel that you are asking for too much? Who I learned knife arts from is my secret. I

came to the culinary college for lessons, not for your interrogation.”

Miss Meng’s frantic expression leveled. She nodded and said, “Sorry. I was belittling you earlier; I apologize.” She actually bowed slightly to Nian Bing.

Nian Bing wanted to help her up, but when he thought about the difference between men and woman, his raised hands just remained awkwardly mid-air. “Miss Meng doesn’t need to be so polite. From your deft hands, I could tell that you specialize in knife techniques. If we have the opportunity we should exchange pointers later, as I came here to deepen my skills.”

The coldness in Miss Meng’s eyes subsided. “Let’s go. I will lead you to the college to report. Our culinary faculty has all kinds of courses. I will recommend you to the faculty chairman.”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “Then I will trouble Miss Meng. I hope that I can learn more here.”

Miss Meng nodded. Her politeness much more obvious, she said to Nian Bing, “Please follow me.” The two people exited the back courtyard and led him away.

When Nian Bing arrived at the Orchid Dream College, it was difficult for him to cover his surprise. Rather than call it a college, it would be better to say it was a small city. The walls surrounding the college were five meters thick and ten meters high. Even the guards at the entrance wore the insignia of the Orchid Dream

Empire on their uniform. On top of the main entrance hung a gigantic signboard, indicating this was a college.

Miss Meng looked at Nian Bing's almost idiotic expression and couldn't help but snicker. Finally, she smiled, and it immediately felt like a spring breeze had melted the frost, attracting Nian Bing's gaze. She said, "The Orchid Dream College has a long-established history. This is the oldest college on the Yang Guang continent and occupies a third of the area of Orchid Dream City. It could be said that this is a city within a city. You saw these walls; they are the work of our college's construction faculty students. It also includes a defensive system, drainage system, counterattack system and many other areas. I heard that it has more defensive capability than an ordinary city.

"The guards at the gate aren't true soldiers, but members of the martial arts faculty. The martial arts faculty is the most famous faculty in the college. The faculty chairman is the most senior out of all the Saints of War, the fifth ranked in the Ten Great Martial Arts Experts. This is very attractive, which makes the martial arts faculty students the most numerous in the college. They probably are a fifth of the students. Not just a few talents have been given in service to the empire from our college. If you have the qualifications to graduate, the empire's cavalry troops would love to hire you. You might even have the opportunity to enter the empire's trump card, the Silver Feather Cavalry."

Nian Bing was silently exclaiming in admiration for the scale of the Orchid Dream College, but he schooled his expression back to normal. He nodded his head and said, "The college's strength is truly vast! However, I don't have much interest towards other faculties. Miss Meng, could you introduce me to your culinary

faculty? Are you a student or a teacher? From your appearance, you don't seem to be over twenty years old."

Chapter 48.1 - Camel Chef Zi Xiu

Miss Meng's smile had already vanished. "You made an error; I am twenty-two years old, and my name is Zi Qing Meng. You can call me by my name as there is no need for formality. Our culinary faculty is a small faculty in the college, and the only one smaller than us is the magic faculty. All the faculties have over a thousand students. We are divided into five grades; every grade has five classes which are cooking with heat, cold foods, wheat products, medicinal cuisine, and regional specialties. The biggest class is cooking with heat; probably a third of students in each year study this. As for me, I am a student of the cold foods department in the fifth year. I'm also the teacher for the knife arts department. So, you could say that I'm both."

A knife arts teacher? It seems that he wasn't mistaken! He specialized in knife arts the most, so he must get the chance to exchange pointers with her. While thinking this, Nian Bing had already followed Zi Qing Meng to the entrance of the college. The four students in charge of guard duty looked at her and immediately straightened up, their eyes deferential as they greeted orderly, "Hello Senior."

Zi Qing Meng nodded but didn't linger and led Nian Bing into the college. "Why do they call you senior but not teacher?" Nian Bing asked with puzzlement.

Zi Qing Meng shot him a glance and said, "Because I am just a fifth grade student in martial arts faculty, so of course they would call me senior. Oh, I forgot to tell you, if you can pass the test, then you can study multiple professions. Of course, you still need to pay the school fees and pass the faculty's exam."

Nian Bing's heart jumped as he felt the cold aura from Zi Qing Meng. He said, "I think that you must be primarily training in martial arts, and the culinary faculty was your elective?" His gaze wasn't directed at her, but on the gigantic mall in front of him. There was at least a thousand people in the mall engaged in all sorts of activities. Some were chatting, some were swapping pointers in martial arts, and some were walking, but the thousand or so people at this training ground seemed lonely. The giant mall was paved with an unknown material, but the ground looked blueish-green and extremely hard. Buildings around the mall would reach eight floors in height. These were most likely the school buildings. This was also the first time that Nian Bing had seen such tall buildings; his curiosity towards this Orchid Dream College increased even more.

Zi Qing Meng looked at Nian Bing, surprised. "How did you know?"

Nian Bing smiled and replied, "If I said it was a guess, would you believe me?" Of course, he had guessed, but his guess was based on the fact that when Zi Qing Meng introduced the Orchid Dream College, she had first talked about the martial arts faculty and not the culinary faculty, and when she was talking about the glory of the martial arts faculty, her face had shown a very proud expression, but when she talked about the culinary faculty, her expression had been more neutral. Nian Bing was good at observation, and through her unconscious display of emotions, he was able to make an accurate guess.

Zi Qing Meng didn't pursue the matter further. The two silently crossed the mall; she directly led Nian Bing to the western school

building. Right before they arrived at the building, she didn't bring him straight through the front, but brought him around to the back. "The main outer buildings are used for the bigger faculty lessons. The culinary faculty is over in that building. Don't forget, because the dorms are also there."

'There' was a five story building. If it were in any other place, a five storied building would be extremely tall, but compared to the eight story buildings outside, it was nothing. The entire building seemed to take up quite a bit of area, and the students coming and going wore the exact same clothes as the students in the mall: a deep blue uniform. However, the emblem on their chests read 'Culinary Arts'.

Zi Qing Meng brought Nian Bing to the entrance to an office on the fifth floor. She pushed open the door without knocking and entered with Nian Bing behind her. He hadn't had the chance to look around when he heard a shriek.

"Ah! Who isn't following the rules, entering the door without knocking...Little Meng, so it was you! Do you want to scare me to death? Next time knock okay?"

Nian Bing peeped from behind Zi Qing Meng to see a man and a woman trying to put on their clothes. The man looked to be over fifty years old. He had a bit of a hunchback, with a circle of red hair surrounding a bald spot. Small eyes, a garlic-shaped nose, large mouth. It wasn't even too much to use vilifying adjectives to describe his appearance. The strange thing was, the woman being intimate with him was obviously much younger. She only looked to be about thirty years in age and pretty. Her figure and

countenance were pretty good, and at the moment, she was blushing as she put on her clothes.

Zi Qing Meng said coldly, “I brought a new student for you, Casanova.”

The hunchbacked man coughed several times, then said, “Isn’t it fine if you just decided on the new students? Why do you need to bring him here? Okay, you two come in. Little Yiyi, you leave first. If I have time, I’ll go and find you.”

Hearing him use a coy voice to say ‘Little Yiyi,’ Nian Bing had the sudden impulse to turn and leave. This was the chairman of the culinary faculty? The middle-aged woman cast her coquettish gazes at the faculty chairman, seeming to not see the handsome Nian Bing. Dragging her upper clothes with her, she left calmly. It seemed that Zi Qing Meng was already accustomed to this as her facial expression did not change at all.

The hunchbacked man coughed again and said, “Come, and sit. It’s a bit messy here.” It really was messy, but not just a bit. Things were scattered all across the office; there was even a pool of liquid on the table. However, the air on the office was very fresh and pure. Zi Qing Meng and Nian Bing entered the room while the hunchbacked man tidied up a bit behind his desk, before his gaze fell on Nian Bing. “If you could make Little Meng bring you here personally, you must have some talent. So what can you do, lad?”

Nian Bing coughed once, maintaining his smile. “I learned cooking for a few days previously, and I wanted to entered your esteemed college to learn more.”

The faculty chairman turned to Zi Qing Meng, and Zi Qing Meng said coldly, “Don’t look at me. Have you seen someone who could learn how to use the Brocade Character Void Lattice in just a few days? I’ll leave him to you, and you can see for yourself.” After speaking, she seemed as if she didn’t want to spend even another moment in the room and turned to leave.

When he heard the four words ‘Brocade Character Void Lattice,’ the faculty chairman’s muddled yellow eyes suddenly lit up. “Brocade Character Void Lattice, you can use one of the Five Distinguished Knife Techniques?”

Nian Bing looked at the chairman’s prominent bones in his hands. He replied, “It could be considered to be, but my heat control is not up to par.” He wasn’t being modest. No matter if it were the Brocade Character Void Lattice or the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons, he was still far from its pinnacle. But right now he wasn’t at the stage where he would see results after practice. Just as Zha Ji had said, he needed comprehension.

“Was it Zha Ji who told you to find me?” The chairman returned to his seated position, but his sentence had made Nian Bing startled. The chairman faculty smiled and said, “Except for Old Zha, there would be no one who could teach someone who only looked to be twenty-years-old the Brocade Character Void Lattice. No need to be surprised. I really didn’t think that after Old Zha disappeared without a trace for twenty years, there would finally be news of him.”

“You know my master?” Nian Bing’s voice wasn’t calm. The

indecent looking old man in front of him gave him a mysterious feeling.

The faculty chairman hehe'd. "Did your master never mention to you the Lascivious Camel Zi Xiu? That old fellow couldn't have forgotten his old friend, right?"

When the four words Lascivious Camel Zi Xiu entered his ears, Nian Bing immediately recalled what Zha Ji had told him before. When he was talking about the chefs in his generation, there were five most outstanding chefs, called the Five Great Culinary Gods in the culinary world. There were separated into the Demon, Strong, Camel, Spirit, and Mysterious chefs. The Mysterious Chef was Ming Yuan's and Ming Hui's master. He was also called an immortal among the chefs. He specialized in delicate hand skills, as well as making wheat foods.

As for his master, Zha Ji, he was the first among the Five Great Chefs. The five of them had gathered three times and had ranked themselves. The third time was called the fiercest showdown in all of the history of the culinary world. Demon Chef who had supernaturally fine craft, barely obtained the final victory. The other four chefs' abilities were only slightly different from one another. When Zha Ji had been commentating on the Camel Chef, his expression had been extremely strange. He said: Lascivious Camel Zi Xiu, that old immature fellow, is the most special one out of all of us. That guy's culinary skills are not only brilliant, but also strange. You probably don't believe it, but his specialties are inspired by the female body. Lascivious Camel Zi Xiu, Lascivious Camel Zi Xiu. He hadn't thought that the the third in the Five Great Chef ranking Camel Chef was the chairman of the college's culinary faculty.

Nian Bing hastened to bow to Zi Xiu and greeted him, “Senior Zi Xiu, so you were the outstanding and famous Camel Chef! This younger generation was truly rude.”

Zi Xiu was a bit impatient when he said, “It’s fine. I hate polite customs the most. Boy, you must’ve have learned culinary arts from Zha Ji for a long time! Where is he now? In these twenty years, there’s been no news of him. The cooking world has undergone many changes.”

Sorrow emanated from Nian Bing’s body. When he recalled his master’s teaching, he couldn’t help but sigh. “Senior Zi Xiu, my master has already passed away, right before I left. I followed Master’s teachings for eight years. Nian Bing cannot forget a single one of his teachings. Senior ZI Xiu, since you were my master’s old friend, could you tell me who was it that made a wager with my master, who made him suffer a crushing defeat and ended up snapping his hand tendons?”

Camel Chef Zi Xiu’s eyes shifted. “Old Man Zha Ji died? Okay, it’s good that he died, he died, so now there will be one less pressure on me. He died, he died, fuck, how come I haven’t died.” Although he was cursing, Nian Bing could clearly tell that his extremely steady hands with prominent bones were trembling slightly. He knew that for a top-level chef, this was almost impossible to happen. Tears glinted in Zi Xiu’s eyes, but they didn’t stay. He sat dumbly in his chair, like a sculpture.

“Senior Zi, are you okay. My master did pass away, but he left very peacefully. You don’t need to be sad.” He looked at Zi Xiu’s

face. Nian Bing understood that he battled with Master for a lifetime, but there were still deep feelings of friendship between them.

“If you aren’t okay, then of course I wouldn’t be. Fuck, Zha Ji that old thing actually died this early. How much of his skills did you learn? If the Demon Chef didn’t pass down his skills, I will not be able to forgive him. Boy, you wanted to know who forced your master to cut his tendons? Okay, if you can beat me in a culinary competition, then I will tell you. If not, you will never know. I, Lascivious Camel Zi Xiu has spoken, and I will definitely not renege on the deal. I will first assign you to the fifth grade. If after a year you cannot match up with my skills, then you must leave.”

Nian Bing said respectfully, “Senior Zi, I don’t think that we’ll have to wait for long. I challenge you right now; I hope that your skills are as good as said. If you lose, then you will have to tell me who the challenger was.”

“Right now? Okay, boy, you are just as self-important as that Demon Chef. Can you do it? Did your master tell you what my specialty was?” The Camel Chef’s voice was full of confidence.

Nian Bing smiled. Although Zi Xiu insulted Zha Ji nonstop, he knew that the feelings between this Camel Chef before him and his master were extremely deep. “Senior Zi Xiu, please forgive me for not being polite. When my master told me about you, he said, “Lascivious Camel Zi Xiu, that old immature fellow, except for using the Dense Jade Screen and the Life Tearing Heavy Eagle Hand, anything else about him isn’t worth mentioning. Well, the creativity he gets from women is not bad. Fuck, that old camel is

way uglier than I am but he somehow gets women to like him. What a cripple's anus – unnatural.’” Nian Bing had learned Zha Ji's tone, and very realistically, repeated it just like Zha Ji had said it. The Camel Chef Zi Xiu's face alternated between green and red.

“Zha Ji, even in death you still trash talk me. You're the cripple's anus, to actually talk about me like this in front of a junior. Hmph, just wait for me to dig up your tomb.” When he heard Nian Bing's words, the Camel Chef Zi Xiu immediately flew into a rage, cursing under Nian Bing's nose and stamping his feet. However, he couldn't control the tears as they ran down his angry face.

Nian Bing acted as if he hadn't heard the Camel Chef's curses. He lowered his head and said, “Master said that the last of the Five Distinguished Knife Techniques is the Dense Jade Screen, and only you can use it perfectly. He was incomparable to you. The Five Distinguished Knife Techniques actually aren't ranked. As long as you can bring one to perfection, then you have reached the peak of the culinary realm. He also said that your Life Tearing Heavy Eagle Hand, number two in the Seven Great Forbidden Techniques, is the only one in all of the Seven Great Forbidden Techniques that can be used to turn food into art, and that he couldn't compare. And in the subtle control of hand strength, you are the number one in the continent.”

Chapter 48.2 - Camel Chef Zi Xiu

Wiping the tears off his face, Zi Xiu snorted and said, “Well, that’s pretty much true. Even if your master was her, you wouldn’t necessarily be able to beat me. For a boy like you, who has only studied cooking for a couple of years to challenge me, it’s still too early. Since you can use the Brocade Character Void Lattice, I reckon you have a superficial knowledge of Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons. For now, study in the fifth grade of the culinary faculty in the cooking with heat class while, like Little Meng, work part-time as a knife arts teacher. I’ll wait for you to surpass both Little Meng, in knife technique and surpass her elder brother Zi Qing Jian in technique, to give you an opportunity.

“She and her brother have studied cooking with me for over ten years. The inheritance of the Heavy Eagle Hand, and Dense Jade Screen Knife techniques have been split between them. Although their heat control is not up to par, but in terms of their age group they are a match for you. If you can beat them, then you are able to match, at least, seventy percent of my strength.”

Nian Bing smiled and replied, “I’ll do as you have said. However, it won’t be long before I exchange pointers with you.”

Zi Xiu looked at Nian Bing and said, “It looks like you have a lot of confidence in yourself!”

Nian Bing said coolly, “As the successor of the Demon Chef, if I didn’t have self-confidence wouldn’t I be diminishing the fame of my master?” When Zha Ji had introduced the Camel Chef Zi Xiu, he had mentioned that, because of Zi Xiu’s extreme arrogance,

only if he could surpass him in the area of his expertise, could he be subdued. Otherwise, he would forever be arrogant and domineering. Thus, Nian Bing's tone gradually became less polite.

Zi Xiu stood up and said, "Since you're here I might as well as tell you. One year has two semesters, and every semester costs ten gold coins. Lodging costs five gold coins and boarding costs another five. In total, the fee for attendance is twenty gold coins. As a teacher, your income is five gold coins a month, so I won't collect any money from you. However, don't count on me to pay your wages. As for classes, you're free to choose. I'll let Little Meng tell you the duties of a knife arts teacher. The culinary faculty's first and second floors are used for teaching. The third and fourth floors are lodging, and the teachers' offices are on the fifth floor. I don't think that you need an office. You can stay on the fourth floor. There aren't many students in the culinary faculty so I can accommodate you in a single room."

Just as Zi Xiu had finished speaking, a rich voice suddenly came from outside. "Second Uncle, Second Uncle. I heard that there's a guy who can use the Brocade Character Void Lattice. Where is he?" The door was knocked open, and a tall figure rushed in. When he saw this person, Nian Bing couldn't help but jump. That person was taller than him by a head. His shoulders were extremely wide. Not only did he need to duck when he passed through the door, he also had to turn sidewise. He wore a deep blue uniform that was tightly wrapped around his strong muscles. His skin was dark, and he had a shock of tangled red hair. His eyes were extremely bright. Although you couldn't say he was handsome, his stalwart and sun-drenched face was very likeable. His whole body emitted strength, particularly his palm-leaf, fan-sized hands and prominent bones. His appearance immediately brought about a feeling of intense oppression. Nian Bing had no doubt that those two hands could

tear him apart.

“Little Jian, don’t learn from your little sister. If you’re always this rude, how can you achieve great things?” asked Zi Xiu ill-temperedly.

The giant man called Little Jian didn’t any pay attention to Zi Xiu, but looked at Nian Bing. Excitedly, he said, “Hello, are you the guy who can use the Brocade Character Void Lattice? My name is Zi Qing Jian, but you can call me Little Jian. Let’s go; we can exchange pointers. Let’s see who has the most awesome skills.” He went to grab Nian Bing.

Nian Bing jumped in fright and dodged Zi Qing Jian’s arm. This was Zi Qing Meng’s elder brother? Heavens! They must have been born from different mothers.

“Little Jian, why are you rushing? He’s not going anywhere; there will be a chance later. Anyways, it’s good that you have arrived. Take him to the fourth floor to find a room, and let your sister deal with the classes that he has to attend. He’s also a temporary knife arts instructor. Nian Bing, you are called Nian Bing right? Go with Qing Jian. If there’s nothing wrong then don’t come to me. Also, if you want to see me, knock first.”

Zi Qing Jian said excitedly, “Uncle, don’t talk rubbish, and just go and pick up your girl. Brother Nian Bing, just leave it to me. Let’s go, Brother Nian Bing.”

When he had recalled what Zi Qing Meng had told him

previously, Nian Bing hurriedly dodged Zi Qing Jian's outstretched hands and said with a bitter smile, "Big Brother Qing Jian, I can walk on my own, also, I don't study martial arts, so I can't withstand you tugging me!"

Zi Qing Jian said somewhat embarrassedly, "Oh, I forgot you aren't part of the martial arts faculty. I'll remember this from now on." The two people then exited the room. When Zi Qing Jian closed the door, it made a deafening sound.

Seeing the door to his office shaking wildly, Camel Chef Zi Xiu said with displeasure, "I should get a pure steel door. Little Meng has disturbed me with a good thing. So Zha Ji's disciple has actually appeared. From his appearance, he should have learned some of Zha Ji's techniques. It seems that the culinary world won't be so peaceful anymore. However, new replacing the old is the way of the world. We old fellows are indeed old. Zha Ji, you old man, have actually died this early. Fuck, fuck." Zi Xiu wasn't in the mood to enjoy the beautiful spring scenery. He sat in his chair with a taciturn expression.

Nian Bing went to the fourth floor with Zi Qing Jian, who immediately shouted, "Teacher Floor Senior, Teacher Floor Senior." His resonant voice jolted the entire floor slightly.

"I'm coming, I'm coming. Oh, it's Zi Qing Jian again. Boy, can't you be quieter? Sooner or later, you're going to knock down the entire building." A clear and crisp voice with a fragrant scent came out. When Nian Bing saw the floor senior, he couldn't help but stare with an open mouth because the woman before him was the pretty, middle-aged woman whom he had seen in Zi Xiu's room

previously.

“Qing Jian, what is it? Oh, so you brought this lad to find a room. I heard what Little Meng was saying to the old man earlier. Lad, welcome to the culinary faculty.”

Although he couldn't look at the woman straight, Nian Bing gripped her hand and said, “I will be troubling you. The chairman said that I could get a room.”

Zi Qing Jian said, “Yes, you can get a single room. The rooms here have two beds, maybe, when we exchange pointers later, I will also have a place to sleep. Teacher Dan Ji, hurry up please.”

Dan Ji smiled slightly and replied, “Then come with me.” Having said this, she seemed to produce a string of keys from nowhere and handed one to Nian Bing. She led them over to a corridor and walked straight. After passing about twenty rooms, she stopped in front of a room numbered 4273. “We don't have many students in our faculty, and some of them are from the city, so our dorms are quite empty. You can lodge here. Lad, what's your name?”

“My name is Nian Bing. Thank you, Teacher Dan Ji.”

Dan Ji's gaze lingered on Nian Bing's face for a second. “Okay, I'll go and rest first. If you have any problems then come find me. Remember that the third floor is the girls' dormitory; men are forbidden there.” There was a hint of a profound smile on her face as she left.

He opened the door and both Nian Bing and Zi Qing Jian walked into his new room. The room was very large, about thirty square meters. There were two wardrobes, two chairs, and two tables. It was pretty plain but clean. Zi Qing Jian sat down on a chair without the slightest trace of politeness. His not-so-light body made the chair creak. “Brother Nian Bing, when do you think I can take a look at your Brocade Character Void Lattice? I heard Second Uncle say before that each of the Five Distinguished Knives have special characteristics and that the Brocade Character Void Lattice is an extremely mysterious knife art.”

Nian Bing smiled lightly and replied, “I have only scratched the surface of it. Big Bro Qing Jian, from your appearance, it doesn’t seem that you have a very harmonious relationship with your uncle!”

“Not harmonious? How could that be? Although my uncle is much older than me and Little Meng, he’s an old child. He’s not very strict with us, so the other things don’t matter. He was the one who asked us to be informal with him.. Being together with Uncle is much more relaxing than being with my father. Uncle is like our friend, maybe even a brother. Nian Bing, you have just arrived here so you won’t understand things about this place very well. Just because you saw Teacher Dan Ji in Uncle’s office earlier, do not think that she abused her relationship with uncle to become the floor senior.”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and said, “I don’t look down on anyone. Is Teacher Dan Ji is your uncle’s wife?”

Zi Qing Jian shook his head and said, “No, my uncle doesn’t have

a wife, but there have been innumerable women through his life. There are many beautiful female teachers here, the majority of whom have some relationship with my uncle. Teacher Dan Ji specializes in wheat foods and is the number one wheat foods teacher in the faculty. She came to the college to teach, but she decided to stay until now because of uncle's culinary talent. If you eat the wheat foods that she makes, you will definitely be captivated. She's taught many useful things to me and Little Meng; if you have the opportunity later, you should learn from her."

Nian Bing nodded and said, "I heard Senior Zi Xiu say that you have studied the Life Tearing Eagle Hand. If we have the opportunity later, I would like to see it."

Zi Qing Jian chuckled and said, "Originally, I didn't have much interest towards culinary arts as making food was something for women. If I hadn't chose to study culinary arts because of Uncle's Life Tearing Eagle Hand, I wouldn't be talking to you right now! Did you know that the Life Tearing Eagle Hand is the only one of the Seven Great Forbidden Techniques that is based on martial arts? It can be used to make food as well as to kill people. Even my father cannot use it, only my uncle can. If I didn't learn it would be too pitiful! Little Sister learned the Dense Jade Screen knife art from him, which has been very helpful for her own martial arts cultivation.

"I'm normally not in class in the culinary faculty, but in the martial arts faculty. If you want to find me, then go over there and ask for Little Jian. My brothers will recognize you. Ah, I can't endure it any longer Brother, could you show me just once? I am very interested about your Brocade Character Void Lattice! Little Sister said that you had used the Brocade Character Void Lattice in

the restaurant and turned every single cucumber into the character meng, so I immediately ran over here. Don't take offense. I'm just someone who's rude and impetuous and very excited about anything to do with martial arts."

Nian Bing smiled and said, "Why would I take offense? I like to meet refreshing and excited people like Big Brother Qing Jian. From what I've seen, you seem to be famous within this college."

Zi Qing Jian scratched his head and said, "That's possible. I am the heavy sword instructor for the martial arts faculty. I am very enthusiastic about martial arts, and you can come find me any time. However, you're a bit old now, so it is a bit late for you to start training in martial arts. But you aren't too old to start strengthening your body. Your physique is pretty good. With enough practice, you could have some success."

Nian Bing shook his head and said, "There's no need for that. I'm only interested in culinary arts, but thank you for the offer. However, there are no ingredients for me to use, so I cannot show you the Brocade Character Void Lattice!"

"Ingredients? That's not hard at all. Right now it's the afternoon lessons. Let's go, I will bring you to the fifth grade classroom. Every afternoon they have knife lessons. Didn't uncle make you a knife arts teacher? You're just in time to show off. Everyone who enters our college must have talent, so if you can't prove yourself to them, then it won't be easy for them to think of you as a teacher." He was a swift and decisive person; whatever he had decided to, he wouldn't go back on it. He stood up and walked out.

Chapter 49.1 - Brocade Character Void

Lattice Shakes The Classroom

Orchid Dream College. These four words echoed in Nian Bing's heart. It looked like he would be staying here for a while. Master! You were unable to tell me who your enemy was, but as your disciple, I can't let go of this hatred. As long as I can find out who your enemy is from the Camel Chef, then I will definitely avenge you. She forced you to snap your hand tendons, so I will force her to snap the tendons and blood vessels of her four limbs. Thinking this, a chilly aura subconsciously emanated from him. From a person who has long since embedded hatred deep within his heart, the caliber of loathing he had was completely different from an ordinary person. From an outsider's point of view, he seemed very good-natured and amiable, but his heart was frozen over. Ever since his father and mother had fallen at the hands of the Ice God's Pagoda, there were only two people capable of moving his heart. The first was the Demon Chef Zha Ji, and the other was the beautiful woman who had given him the Heavenly Flower Tile. As for other people, they were nothing more than mist in his eyes. At most, he would only admire them.

The duo arrived on the second floor. Zi Qing Jian continued with his tradition of not knocking and opened the doors to the classrooms one by one. After going through six classrooms, he finally found the one he was looking for. "Nian Bing, it's here. Come in with me." Having said this, he pushed open the door and led Nian Bing into the classroom.

The classroom was very large, over fifty students inside. Standing behind the lectern was a middle-aged man over forty years old. When he saw Zi Qing Jian, he couldn't help but crease

his brows. “Qing Jian, what are you doing? This isn’t your martial arts faculty classrooms. For what reason, did you come here?” Nian Bing gaze fell on the lectern. There was a very large chopping board on it, next to it was a table where some meat and vegetables were laid out. Every student also had a desk in front of them, although the ingredients were the same, it was smaller than those on the lectern,. It looked like they had just started the class.

Zi Qing Jian hehe’d and said, “Teacher Fan, don’t be mad. I’m introducing you to Nian Bing. This is Fan Jian, or Teacher Fan, but he isn’t [Fan Jian \(犯贱\)](#). Fan is the surname Fan (范), and Jian is the Jian(健) from healthy(健康).” It would have been better if he hadn’t said anything, as the students immediately burst into laughter. The fanjian teacher’s face contorted, as if he was trying to prevent himself from erupting. Zi Qing Jian feigned ignorance, and continued on, as if he hadn’t seen the teacher’s dissatisfaction. “Teacher Fan. This is Nian Bing, a new knife arts teacher. I brought him here so you and the students could check him out.”

Fan Jian looked at Nian Bing with surprise. He said, “A new knife arts teacher?” He wasn’t the only one surprised even the students wore shocked expressions. Before Nian Bing, Zi Qing Meng was the Orchid Dream’s College youngest teacher. These students had utmost confidence in themselves. Zi Qing Meng was able to suppress them because of her outstanding appearance as well as the level of perfection her knife techniques had achieved. For a new knife arts teacher to appear, who was even younger than her, the students would have a hard time accepting this.

Nian Bing nodded to Fan Jian. He said, “Hello, Teacher Fan. I have just arrived at the college and will be in your care.”

Zi Qing Jian said somewhat impatiently, “Okay, okay. Stop with the formalities. Nian Bing hurry up at let me see your skills. And make those fellows acknowledge you.”

Nian Bing sent an inquiring gaze over to Fang Jian. “Can I, Teacher Fan?” He was very clear that as long as he could demonstrate his talent now, to establish his foothold in the college, he would be able to pass his days comfortably.

Fan Jian’s class had been disrupted so he was very angry, but Zi Qing Meng held a very high position in the college. Although he usually treated people very nicely, it was hard for him to think highly of someone. Thus, Fan Jian looked at Nian Bing as someone with the ability to earn the respect of Zi Qing Jian. He made a permissive gesture to Nian Bing and said, “Since you are a knife arts teacher of this faculty, we are colleagues from now on, so go ahead.”

Nian Bing was no longer humble. He walked up to where Fan Jian was and looked at the fifty-plus students with a calm smile. “You most likely think that because I am so young, I’m not suited to be your teacher. But let me tell you that when comparing culinary skills, age is not a deciding factor. If you truly think that your skills are above mine, then I’ll let you have this position any time.”

His tone was very calm, but hidden within it was an arrogance that filled the hall. Of course, he couldn’t just use his words to make the students acknowledge him. Just when Nian Bing lowered his voice, someone heckled him, “All talk and no action. Let us see if you have the talent to talk big.”

Nian Bing raised a hand to point in the direction of the voice. "You there, stand up."

"Standing is just standing. I'm not scared of you." The student wasn't tall, but was very robust. He probably trained himself regularly as you could see his muscles bulging out slightly from the uniform. His dark red hair was sticking upwards like a hedgehog, and he wore a disdainful expression. Obviously, he didn't approve Nian Bing due to his age.

Zi Qing Jian said, "Dun Zi, so it was you causing trouble." It looked as if he was very familiar with this student.

The student called Dun Zi chuckled and said, "Big Bro Jian, I can't believe that he is on the same level as Big Sis Meng!"

Zi Qing Jian snorted and replied, "Take a look and you see. You will soon know that Little Meng thinks of Nian Bing as her greatest opponent. You stinky brat, you never pay attention in class and cause trouble for teachers, all day long. Wait for tomorrow's heavy sword class. You and I will exchange pointers."

Dun Zi jumped in fright and waved his hands rapidly. "Never mind, never mind. Is it fine if I admit you could instantly kill me? Big Bro Jian, you are the person I admire most after the principal. Could you really have the heart to hurt my childish self?"

The classroom was once again sent into laughter. Dun Zi, who described himself as childish, wore a shy and coquetish

expression, making people laugh.

The only one who wasn't laughing was Nian Bing. When the laughter stopped, he picked up a kitchen knife on the table and weighed it in his hand. Although this knife was far from Proud Sky, it was much better than the one that he used at the restaurant. "You are Dun Zi?"

Dun Zi snorted and puffed out his chest and said, "That's right, so what about it? Are you going to cut me with that knife? You won't be able to do it."

Nian Bing smiled and replied, "I am a chef not a martial artist. Since you want someone to cut you, I think that Big Brother Qing Jian could do it for you tomorrow. I asked you to stand up so I could know your name. I know that you guys don't accept this, and perhaps most of you are older than me. As long as one of you can replicate my knife techniques, then I will honor you as my teacher. If not, then you must call me teacher and remember my name. My name is Nian Bing."

While talking, he picked up a large carrot. All the students, including Dun Zi, looked at Nian Bing. They all wanted to see if this domineering newcomer had the skills.

With a slight smile, a cold light flashed in Nian Bing's eyes. His fingers that were grasping the knife moved slightly. The kitchen knife immediately twirled in his hand. With some motions from his palm, the rotation speed began to get faster and faster.

Dun Zi stood there and snorted through his nose. “What is this, when I was three years old I could also play with knives. You think can be our teacher with this bit of talent...”

Nian Bing continued to spin the knife in his hand while looking at Dun Zi. It seemed like two bolts of cold lightning had streaked across the classroom. Dun Zi felt his body grow cold, and the chatter behind him stopped. At this moment, Nian Bing moved, but for real.

He spread out the carrot in his left hand and balanced it across his palm whilst the knife in his hand approached the carrot. When the knife touched the carrot, it spun rapidly. Nian Bing’s right hand had already turned into a blur. There was no sound from the vegetable as it was being cut; everything was silent. The glinting light from the knife continued to pass through the carrot. Even Zi Qing Jian couldn’t see the outline of the knife clearly.

Nian Bing’s hands were steady as the knife cut through the carrot. It seemed as if he was repeating an identical movement over and over again. He raised his head, not looking at his left hand, but swept his gaze across the whole classroom. “What is the foundation of knife arts? It is stability. Without stability, even if you could occasionally produce some results, it couldn’t be called expertise with knife techniques. The crucial point of my knife technique is in the tip. If you had the talent, you should have been able to see clearly that only talking big will doom you to a lifetime of mediocrity. Big Brother Qing Jian, this is the Brocade Character Void Lattice that you had wanted to see.”

When he heard the words Brocade Character Void Lattice, Fan

Jian's whole body shook, and a dumbstruck light appeared in his eyes.

The knife light suddenly became fainter, and the spinning stopped. Nian Bing's hand, wielding the knife continued to vibrate strangely as the knife continued to prick the carrot. Red, identical shavings appeared on top of the chopping board. The left hand holding carrot hadn't moved at all while it was covered by the glistening light from the knife. It seemed that the carrot didn't need to move at all, as the knife would just cut around it. At this moment, the trembling knife lights started to spin faster than previously. Except for a faint afterimage, no one could see anything else.

Duo—. The light faded, and the kitchen knife was stuck in the chopping board. All of the tremors had disappeared. Nian Bing's forehead was dripping with sweat, and his exhale was a bit hurried. His left hand slowly stretched outwards, presenting the carrot to all of the students. "Dun Zi, tell me, what do you see now?"

Dun Zi cast his gaze doubtfully on the carrot. "A carrot! So you made holes and pits on the carrot. What sort of knife technique was that?" Nian Bing's imposing manner had oppressed him before but with Zi Qing Jian's threatening air, he would not dare to so easily mock him.

Indeed, just as Dun Zi had said, the carrot had some weird pits, but still looked a carrot. He didn't see any special characteristics. Zi Qing Jian's gaze was also despairing but only Fan Jian's eyes sparkled. He wanted to say something, but had no way of

confirming his ideas.

“If you want to train in knife arts, you must first train your eyes. You can’t even see what I was doing, it seems your fifth grade culinary faculty is still unrefined.” Nian Bing extended his hands to pinch at the tip and bottom of the carrot, raising it up. He swept his eyes along the hall, and then the next moment, his body emitted an incomparably dominating aura, a dominating aura that stemmed from his self confidence. Both his hands trembled slightly and separated to the sides creating an unbelievable scene.

The originally pitted carrot immediately unfolded like a cloth. No, it would be better to say that it was like a piece of red silk. It floated outward, without breaking. The originally conical shaped carrot actually turned into a meter long piece of cloth, but, unbelievably, on the cloth were two words, Dun Zi, imprinted about a hundred times.

Dun Zi rubbed his eyes and opened them wide as possible. “This—this is impossible! You are not using knife arts, this is magic! It’s definitely magic!”

Nian Bing set the carrot, which had turned into red silk on the chopping board. “Have you heard of a spell like this? There is nothing impossible in the world. There are only things that you dare, and do not dare to do, things that you dare and do not dare to dream of. If you don’t try, how will you know whether you will be defeated? In the north of the Ice Moon Empire, there is a skill called papercutting. They take a piece of paper and fold it up into very tiny pieces. When they open it up again, there will be fantastic designs on the paper. My knife technique is inspired by

papercutting. The most important point is to completely embody the tip part of knife.

“Carrots are a very simple ingredient. Even though it is not seen as much, the Brocade Character Void Lattice used on its soft surface can bring out its quintessence. You’re still far from enough. Teacher Fan, I have bothered you. Please continue with your lesson.” Having said this, Nian Bing tugged the shocked Zi Qing Jian out of the classroom.

When they left, the entire classroom was still dead silent. Dun Zi rubbed his eyes a few more times, but the carrot still looked as fantastical as before.

Fan Jian took his place behind the lectern and swept his gaze over the students. “Students, what did you see just now? Who can tell me?”

A student who was on good terms with Dun Zi answered, “Teacher Fan, I know that the teacher called Nian Bing must definitely have prepared a silk ahead of time. Then he threw around his knife for a little bit and right before showing us, swapped the carrot for the silk.”

“Utter nonsense! Which of you saw him swap it with a silk? Come over here and try to eat these one hundred ‘Dun Zi’ and tell me if it’s possible.” Fan Jian was very angry. “You are all trash. You are so arrogant everyday, but for what? Today you saw true talent, but then you vilify him? The carrot is mine, the knife is also mine. Teacher Nian Bing didn’t know Dun Zi ahead of time. What just happened right now in this classroom will have you know that

there are people beyond people and heavens beyond heaven. Do you even know what the Brocade Character Void Lattice is? Can you tell me?”

犯 means criminal, 贱 means cheap. These words sound the same, so he is making a joke.

Chapter 49.2 - Brocade Character Void Lattice Shakes The Classroom

The students looked at each other with dismay, not daring to speak.

Fan Jian continued coldly, “So none of you know. All of you, from all sorts of restaurants, all over the continent, were specially dispatched to study at this college, but because of your inexperience, you will forever be unable to reach the pinnacle of cooking. In the world of culinary arts, in this land, there are five mystical knife arts. The mysteries of these knife techniques, in my opinion, are incomparable to any peak-level martial arts techniques. They are much more brilliant. Hear my words: the five knife techniques are the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons, the Fiery Glow of the Setting Sun, Eight Feather Flower Courtyard, Brocade Character Void Lattice, and the Dense Jade Screen. The one Teacher Nian Bing showed before was the fourth ranked Brocade Character Void Lattice. Although he is young, he is more than enough to be your teacher. I’ll admit that his knife techniques are something I’m far from reaching, so don’t say anymore rubbish. Once you learn true knife arts from Teacher Nian Bing, only then will you realize the degree your own talent. Class dismissed.”

Nian Bing pulled Zi Qing Jian outside and released him. He said with a smile, “Are all the students in Orchid Dream College this terrible to teach? It looks like it’s not good to be a teacher!”

Zi Qing Jian looked at Nian Bing with a strange light in his eyes. “Brother, I really admire you. Your knife technique was too

mystical. No wonder the Brocade Character Void Lattice is ranked higher than the Dense Jade Screen. The Dense Jade Screen truly has no way of comparing!”

Nian Bing smiled slightly and replied, “Actually, there was a bit of a trick to what I did just now. Layering all the words together wasn’t that hard. A single knife stroke built on the others. If I had to directly carve out each word, it would be much more difficult. This was only a matter of heat control. With a bit of practice, anyone could do it.” Even if his technique of layering out the words worked very well, it wasn’t the essence of the Brocade Character Void Lattice. When he started to spin the kitchen knife, he had divided the carrot into layers. Then, like in papercutting, he had to cut only one part to finish the whole thing. It looked very impressive, except that, this was only the foundations of the Brocade Character Void Lattice. The most important point was to be familiar with the shape of the characters.

“Okay, Brother, you don’t need to be modest. I will immediately go and find my little sister. I think her knife arts aren’t superior to yours. That girl is always looking to the top. I really want to see what her response will be when she hears about your feat, haha. Brother, go to the second floor of the the main building and the administrative area will be just ahead. Wait a moment for me to bring Little Sister with you, and we’ll help you find your uniform.” He ran off like the wind, not waiting for Nian Bing’s response. There was no flash of qi, so with just his physical strength alone, his speed had reached a frightening level. Nian Bing estimated that Zi Qing Jian’s martial arts must have at least reached the level of a Great Swordmaster.

Stretching out his hands, Nian Bing was full of self-confidence.

His knife arts hadn't regressed from disuse. Instead, in the period he left the Peach Blossom Forest, he had comprehended much more. Along with the increase in his spiritual power, it looked like that he wasn't far from reaching the highest realm of the Brocade Character Void Lattice. Ai, when could he bring the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons to such heights! It really was difficult. Right now, he could only capture the shape of the dragons but not their spirit. Fortunately, he had been able to see a true dragon. If he had the chance to practice again, he might be able to gain new insights.

While thinking this, he went in the direction of the mall. Whenever he came to a new place, he had to familiarize himself with his surroundings. Only he didn't know what the communications this place had with the external world was like. When the war ended, he would immediately go to Profound Orchid City to complete Luo Rou's task. Then before he had to participate in the Rising Mage Tournament, he would be completely free.

Caught up in his thoughts, Nian Bing had already arrived at the ginormous mall. The entire college gave him a carefree feeling, especially the mall. He strained to look in the distance. The college hadn't disappointed him, and he was more open-minded. At least here he was able to meet Camel Chef Zi Xiu. After he had finished orienting himself, he would definitely challenge him.

"Lad, are you new here?" asked an aged man next to Nian Bing.

Nian Bing was startled and cursed himself for letting his guard down. With such a high spirit power like his, someone actually appeared next to him without knowing. He turned to where the

voice was coming from to see an old man standing there. He had a head of blue-grey hair and he wore a simple cloth robe. He was holding a small broom and was currently sweeping the ground slowly. This elder seemed familiar, but Nian Bing couldn't put a finger on it. He hadn't seen him before. The old man's tall body was already somewhat stooped, but his eyes were exceedingly queer. His purple irises were extremely clear, without the slightest muddled yellow characteristic of old people. If it weren't for his wrinkled face and elderly posture, Nian Bing couldn't tell his age.

“Hello, I arrived at the college today. I am a student from the culinary faculty.” Although the old man seemed to be a sanitation worker, Nian Bing was still polite. Zha Ji had told him to never look down on anyone, especially people you couldn't see through. If you respect others, they will respect you. Of course, if they aren't worthy of respect, that is a different story.

The old man nodded and said, “I say, I have never seen you before, but you look like your heart is very heavy!”

Nian Bing was startled. He always thought that his concealment was very profound. Was he inadvertently exposing something? Vigilant, he said, “Studying in Orchid Dream College is an honor. The studying environment here gives me great pressure. I was just thinking over how best to study, which might make you laugh at me.”

The old man cast a thoughtful gaze at Nian Bing. “Quickly collect your school uniform. After you wear your uniform, you will truly become a part of Orchid Dream College.”

Nian Bing nodded and said, “Thank you. I will leave first.” After speaking, he turned over to the main building next to the mall. While walking, he heard the old man behind him muttering to himself. “The feeling of sweeping is very nice, especially the rustling sound made when the broom touches the ground. It’s the sound of nature. The most basic of work can give me the greatest pleasure.”

His heart jumped. Nian Bing didn’t stop walking, but he continued to mull over the old man’s words. What could he mean? The basics, the basics, yes! How could I have forgotten the basics. When I was learning culinary arts from master, I learned the basics for five years. Master had said that the time was too short. If you have the best foundations, then it will be easier to learn cooking. Magic is the same. Magic power is the foundation. If I pursue magic spells or magic scrolls, I might be able to gain a temporary strength, but I will never be able to reach the pinnacle of magic. Mao Mao’s father had already reminded me of this, but I overlooked it.

These days, Nian Bing had diligently meditated everyday, but the majority of his thoughts were spent on magic spells and to understanding the Ice and Fire Source. Good skills needed a foundation. I get it, I get it! No matter if it culinary arts or magic, the thing I must do now is still train the basics.

Thinking this, Nian Bing’s mind suddenly opened up. He stopped in his tracks and wanted to go back and thank the old man. But when he turned around, the old man was nowhere to be seen. You may see the dragon’s head but not the tail, was Nian Bing’s comment about him.

When he went to the main school building, he had just thought about entering when two students in front of the doorway stopped him. They didn't wear a soldier's clothing like the guards at the gate of the college. When the two people saw his clothes, one of them said, "Who are you? What are you doing at our college?"

Nian Bing smiled and replied, "Hello, I am a new student. I have come to get my uniform."

The student said with suspicion, "Teachers bring students to get uniforms. Why are you alone? Sorry, but you cannot enter. What faculty are you from? Ask the teacher there to bring you to get your uniform. If not, we cannot let you enter."

Nian Bing wrinkled his brow. Right at this time, a frosty voice came from behind him. "He is from our faculty. I will bring him in." He turned to see Zi Qing Jian and his sister.

The two students looked at the siblings and immediately greeted them. Zi Qing Meng's expression was strange as she looked at Nian Bing. "Sorry, this is the rules of the college. Big Brother really, to forget this. Come in with us."

Zi Qing Jian was apologetic. Nian Bing smiled. "No problem. I was going to wait for you anyway."

The trio entered the school building. While going up the stairs, Nian Bing took stock of his surroundings. He saw that each classroom had a signboard on the doorway, on top of which was written different kinds of martial arts.

Zi Qing Jian gave Nian Bing an explanation. “Because our martial arts faculty is the largest in the college, the main teaching building is for our use except for the eighth floor which is used by the magic faculty. They have the least number of people, only about one hundred students.

Magic faculty? Nian Bing’s heart jolted slightly. If there was a magic faculty here, then this Orchid Dream College might have a library that he could go see. “Big Brother Qing Jian, is there a library here?”

Zi Qing Jian laughed. “Of course we have one. They are divided by faculty. Your culinary faculty library is in your teaching building. Our martial arts faculty has a very small library because the teachers said if the students wanted to learn complicated things, it wouldn’t be good for their development. On the contrary, the smallest magic faculty has a special library that is very big. However, only members of the magic faculty can enter.”

Zi Qing Jian was so honest and straightforward it was cute. Nian Bing had a more favorable impression towards him. Currently, he was hesitating. Should he continue to hide the truth about his magic? Was it necessary? If he wanted to know who his master’s enemy was, he would need to defeat Camel Chef Zi Xiu. Not showing off his specialty, magic cooking, would be very hard. Since it was like that, then there was no meaning in trying to hide his magic. Anyway, he would not be staying here for too long.

Following Zi Qing Jian and his sister, he was given a uniform as well as a teacher’s emblem. They had exited the educational

administrative area when Zi Qing Meng, who hadn't said anything to help Nian Bing, opened her mouth. "Nian Bing, I want to exchange pointers with you on knife arts."

Nian Bing smiled coolly. "I also wanted to see Miss Qing Meng's Dense Jade Screen. However, today is no good. I've just arrived here and am tired. Wait for me to familiarize myself with the place and then we can do it."

Zi Qing Meng obviously didn't think that Nian Bing would actually refuse her challenge. She said with a small frown, "You are a grown man, could your body be so frail."

Nian Bing said neutrally, "I'm not like you. I don't cultivate martial arts, so why couldn't my body be weak?"

Zi Qing Meng's purple irises flashed. She said coldly, "Are you bearing grudges for what happened at the restaurant?"

Nian Bing shook his head and said, "I am not such a petty person, Miss Qing Meng. I was wondering if I could be like you and take another course?"

Zi Qing Meng was blank for a moment. "You want to take another elective?" Obviously, she was extremely surprised. However, she very quickly returned to normal. "What do you want to study? As long as you can pass the exam, you can choose another faculty to study in. However, you can only choose one."

Nian Bing smiled and turned to Zi Qing Jian. “Big Brother Qing Jian, could I trouble you to refer me for the magic faculty acceptance exam? I want to study magic.”

Zi Qing Jian was in great shock. “Brother, don’t make a mistake. Magic is extremely difficult. I think that you should study a self-protection skill. It would be better to take martial arts with me; with my reputation you wouldn’t have to take the test. The teachers in the magic faculty are very old fashioned; you will have to pass the test to enter the magic faculty.”

Zi Qing Meng said, “What Big Brother said is right. Although Magic looks more beautiful, it is far less useful than martial arts. I think that you should choose to study martial arts. If you spent a large amount of time to study magic, then you will be able to be successful, but your cooking skills would be neglected.”

Nian Bing stuck out his right hand. “There is no use in you persuading me. Actually, my primary profession is a chef, but at the same time, I’m also a mage. Look.” A light flashed in his hands. Without a sound, the icicle wand appeared in the palm of his hands. With a push from his magic power, the surrounding air became very cold.

“How can this be?” Zi Qing Meng looked at the magic wand in Nian Bing’s hand, unable to believe reality.

Nian Bing said coolly, “As I just said back in the culinary faculty classroom, there is nothing that is impossible in this world. There are only things that you dare not dream, or dare not try. Okay, the magic faculty is on the eighth floor, right? Miss Qing Meng, I do

not dare to trouble you further. Big Brother Qing Jian, please bring me there.”

Chapter 50.1 - Fire And Earth Dual Element Mage

Zi Qing Jian was not more surprised than his sister. He had a straightforward personality. Though he was surprised that Nian Bing could use magic, he likened it to how he and his little sister were studying martial arts and culinary arts at same time. Without any suspicion, he headed to the stairs.

Nian Bing followed Zi Qing Jian and heard Zi Qing Meng say, “I’ll go with you. I want to see if your magic is up to par. Martial arts and culinary arts have some commonalities, especially with Big Brother’s Heavy Eagle Hand and my knife arts, but magic isn’t related to cooking at all. I don’t believe that you could somehow be a genius in both.”

Ever since he had met Zi Qing Meng, Nian Bing clearly knew about her arrogance. When he saw her exceptionally haughty face, Nian Bing couldn’t help but feel fed up. From the bottom of his heart, he still liked Feng Nu and Long Ling’s personalities much more. Long Ling was as soft as gentle as water, and Feng Nu was both soft and firm. They were easier to accept. However, Zi Qing Meng was a lot like Luo Rou, because they had some ability in certain areas, so they cultivated a domineering attitude. Towards this kind of women, Nian Bing really didn’t have an inclination to care about them. He didn’t chat with Zi Qing Meng any longer and followed Zi Qing Jian.

The magic faculty was a lone branch on a tree in the Orchid Dream college. The student dormitories, teaching location, and magic experiment rooms were all on the eighth floor of the main

building. Once you stepped onto the eighth floor, you could immediately feel intense magic element flooding the hallway. Upon closer inspection, the reason for the propensity of the magic element is mainly because of inscriptions on the walls. They were simple magic arrays, but at the center of each diagram was a different, complex symbol. Each symbol represented a different attribute. In addition to the symbols, there were also magic stones imbedded in the center. Although they weren't of particularly high quality, but with the magic arrays, these stones had the ability to condense a lot of magic.

The strong magic atmosphere was comparable to the Ice Moon Empire's mage association. Nian Bing sighed silently. There weren't even these kinds of inscriptions in the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association! It wasn't because the inscriptions were particularly hard, but because the association didn't have the funds to buy large quantities of magic stones. Just as Long Ling had said, money was the mage association's biggest barrier to growth.

"Every time I come to this place it feels a bit stifling, but it must be very enjoyable for these fellows," Zi Qing Jian complained.

Stifling? Nian Bing suddenly realized that it must be because the density of magic was too strong. For non-mages, the weight of every attribute of magic element would naturally feel stifling. But if a mage were to cultivate magic here, it would be extremely beneficial.

"Boom—" suddenly, a large explosion came from the magic faculty classroom no. 3 next to Nian Bing, causing him to jump in fright.

The sound, although loud, wasn't accompanied by any shaking.

“Idiot, how have you been training your magic control? You can't even control a exploding flame; do you want to kill everyone here?” an angry roar followed the blast. The rich, resonant voice was much like Zi Qing Jian's.

Zi Qing Jian stood still and whispered to Nian Bing, “I don't know which student got unlucky this time. That voice belongs to the magic faculty chairman. He's nicknamed history's strongest magic scholar. Whether or not you can enter the mage faculty depends on if you can pass his test.”

“History's strongest magic scholar? Not a magister? Magic scholars are strong, but they can't compare with magisters.” Nian Bing looked at Zi Qing Jian with suspicion.

Zi Qing Jian merely shrugged his broad shoulders. “I don't know much. You should ask him yourself. I don't understand magic, and this nickname of his is known throughout the entire continent. He didn't call himself that.”

“Who's out there making a ruckus, disturbing my class?” the angry voice yelled out. A fist-sized fireball flew out from the window, tracing a perfect arc as it accurately aimed for Zi Qing Jian's head.

The sudden appearance of the fireball frightened Zi Qing Jian. He was just thinking about using qi to block it when a ball of blue light appeared in front of him. Nian Bing had already stuck out his right

hand holding the icicle wand to condense a dense cloud of ice element in front of that fist-sized fireball. His whole body shook, and then the fireball exploded and disappeared and Nian Bing was sent stumbling backwards due to the explosion.

His heart was immediately sent into turmoil. He had always prided himself on his superior magical control, but the fireball from just now also contained several ordinary fireballs without any special effects. It seemed that they had changed because of the will of the caster. When the rank 1 spell came in contact with his icicle wand, it had actually had stuck together, and then suddenly exploded. Although it had the strength of a rank 1 spell, the instant it exploded it had turned into three spells. When it exploded, the explosive force that should have gone all over actually was condensed in one direction, so it made him, who was holding onto an icicle wand, forced backwards.

This was a rank 1 magic so he could still handle it. If it were a high-ranked spell, it might become hard for him to block it. Once Nian Bing had analyzed the reason for him being forced back, Nian Bing immediately regained his confidence.

Zi Qing Jian said loudly, “Chairman Hei, it’s me. How come you don’t distinguish between green and red and black and white and attack?” While saying this, he pushed opened the classroom door and entered in ill humor.

Zi Qing Jian was really too large. Standing behind him, Nian Bing could not see anything. He could only hear the mage’s voice project, “So it was Little Zi! Who told you to be all sneaky and disrupt my class. Couldn’t you come look for me when I don’t have

class? Wait outside first. After I finish class we can talk.”

Zi Qing Jian said, “Sorry for bothering you. I will wait for you outside.” He hurriedly retreated, but when he was moving back Nian Bing caught a glimpse of the classroom. It was exceedingly large with about a hundred people in it. It seemed that all of the students in the magic faculty were there. From Zi Qing Jian’s attitude to Chairman Hei, he knew that this faculty chairman must have a high position in the college.

Closing the door, Zi Qing Jian turned to Nian Bing with a smile. “Brother, so you really were a mage! Right now we will have to wait for a while. Chairman Hei’s temper isn’t too good.”

Nian Bing smiled in return. “No problem; it’s fine if I wait a moment.”

Zi Qing Meng looked at Nian Bing with a strange expression. “What rank mage are you?”

Nian Bing replied coolly, “I don’t really know, but passing through the magic faculty test won’t pose too big of a problem. Big Brother Qing Jian, I heard that the Harmonic Flower Empire and the Qi Lu Empire launched an attack against Profound Orchid. Do you know anything about this?”

Zi Qing Jian nodded and replied, “I heard just yesterday that the current situation is really terrible! Currently, we can only hope that the aid from the Ice Moon Empire will be enough. I really wanted to go the battlefield to see for myself, but the principal

doesn't allow students who haven't graduated to participate in the war. I'm also a teacher, so I can't leave. Warriors should throw themselves into the battle in order to show their true worth. Once I've finished teaching this batch of students, I will definitely enter the empire's strongest Silver Feather Cavalry and demonstrate my skills." When he said this, his eyes were filled with longing. He was definitely a battle junkie.

Nian Bing didn't inquire further. He did not have a whit of interest towards war. The trio silently waited at the entrance of the classroom.

After an hour, an enchanted bell rang, signalling the end of class.

The door opened and the magic students filed out. Their clothes were different than the students of other faculties. Each of them wore an elementary mage's gown, but the color was deep blue. On their chest was inlaid a magic stone of different attributes, indicating the attribute of magic they cultivated.

The students expressions were very neutral; there wasn't even anyone who greeted Zi Qing Jian and his sister. One by one, they left for different directions of the eighth floor. At the very back was an elderly mage. He had a head of white hair and a grizzled face, indicating that he was at least seventy to eighty years old. He was very slim, and he directed his muddled yellow eyes at the three when he said, "Come in." The discrepancy between his rich voice and his small stature gave people a strange feeling. On his red robe was a golden flame insignia. So a fire magic scholar?

"Chairman Hei, I have brought you a new student. He has just

entered the culinary faculty and wants to dual enroll in the magic faculty. Take a look at him?” said Zi Qing Jian.

“Dual enroll in the magic faculty? A chef wants to learn magic?” Chairman Hei’s muddy yellow gaze suddenly sparkled with cold lightning as he glared at Nian Bing.

Nian Bing didn’t cower at all as he returned his gaze. Although he felt like he was being seen through by the other, he managed to control his gaze so he didn’t back off at all.

Chairman Hei’s eyes exuded surprise. “Then he can try. Lad, was it you who just blocked my fireball spell right now?”

Nian Bing nodded and replied, “Hello, Chairman Hei.”

Chairman Hei’s gaze swept over Zi Qing Jian and Zi Qing Meng. “You two can leave. He’ll stay here alone.”

Zi Qing Jian smiled. “Sorry for troubling you then. Little Sister, let’s go.”

Zi Qing Meng blinked her large purple eyes. What made people’s eyes pop out was that the arrogance on her face had disappeared, replaced by a warm smile that could melt all ice. She walked up to Chairman Hei and grabbed his stick-thin arms. “Uncle Hei, I want to what your test for him is like, can I? Please let me and Big Brother stay.”

Chairman Hei wore a smile. “You girl, really like to bother people. You don’t study magic, so what’s the use of watching?” Although he had not agreed, his tone had softened greatly.

“No, I want to see. Uncle Hei, I’ll make you a meal to make it up to you. Don’t you like drinking alcohol? Tonight I will make some dishes that go well with alcohol for you.”

“Okay, you can stay and see.” Chairman Hei looked at the beautiful girl who was taller than him by half a head helplessly.

Nian Bing said, “Chairman Hei, what’s the test?”

Chairman Hei looked at the icicle wand in Nian Bing’s hand. “You’re a ice mage. Good. If you can use a rank 2 spell to break my rank 1 flame spell, then you pass.” While saying this, he raised his brittle left arm, and a ball of dark red flame rose from it. It indeed looked like an ordinary flame spell.

Nian Bing, however, didn’t think the test could be so simple. As the rank of spells got higher, the difference between high-ranking spells and low-ranking spells became even greater. Although rank 2 spells and rank 1 spells have a significant difference, the difference isn’t as big as higher-ranked spells. Before, he already had a taste of this magic scholar’s magic control. So it seemed that using a rank 2 ice spell to break his rank 1 flame spell wouldn’t be so easy. He didn’t waste any time and raised his wand. He looked around him, and thought of a good method.

A faint blue light gradually gathered as he chanted in a deep,

rhythmic voice. Pellets of rank 2 ice bullets began to form in front of Nian Bing. He didn't rush to attack, but only continued to condense ice bullets.

“Boy, if you want to use ice bullet rain, that is a rank 3 spell,” Chairman Hei reminded Nian Bing.

Nian Bing smiled, “If they don't attack together, then they aren't ice bullet rain .” At this moment, there were already over a dozen ice bullets in front of him. He pointed his wand forward and with a flash of light, a bullet suddenly charged towards the flame in Chairman Hei's hand.

Chairman Hei looked at Nian Bing calmly. The flame in his hand immediately compressed to a third of the original size. When he saw the ice bullet near, the flame expanded. However, he hadn't expected that that incoming ice bullet would suddenly stop a meter away. As the flame was expanding, the ice bullets suddenly exploded and a icy fog enshrouded the rank 1 flame. Because of the icy fog, the flame immediately dimmed. It looked to have been extinguished when it suddenly regained momentum and pushed open the icy fog.

“A flexible flame. Your magic control is truly admirable.” Nian Bing's eyes were full of respect as the second bullet flew outward.

Chairman Hei's eyes were also full of surprise. Nian Bing's control of the ice bullet spell had already surpassed his expectation. At the moment, the second ice bullet had already drawn near. The flame in Chairman Hei's hands compressed to as small as possible without any eruptions. At this time, Nian Bing

showed off his precise magic control. The bullet flying through the air stopped seven times and sped up seven times. The flying direction and speed were constantly changing. Although it was just an ice bullet, it made people feel like it had a thousand permutations.

As It drew closer, the ice bullet suddenly picked up speed one meter away from Chairman Hei, it also showed a big change. The entire bullet was compressed into an ice needle. With three times the speed, it flashed towards Chairman Hei's forehead, ignoring the flame in his hands.

Chapter 50.2 - Fire And Earth Dual Element Mage

The speeding ice needle was only one meter away, leaving Chairman Hei very little room to dodge. A mage's true strength was revealed in a crisis. A layer of faint yellow light enshrouded Chairman Hei's face, making his face turn yellow. However, the sudden appearance of the odd spell wasn't hit by the needle. Just as the ice needle was about to hit Chairman Hei, it suddenly exploded, turning into an icy mist, obscuring his view. Chairman Hei thought, Not good! but he didn't have enough time to respond. His left hand shook, and the flame disappeared.

The icy fog dissipated, and Chairman Hei's gaze was luminous as he looked at Nian Bing. "You were able to threaten the east and strike the west with your child and mother chain of ice bullets. You've passed the test."

At the moment, Nian Bing was dumbly looking at Chairman Hei, with shock. Chairman Hei gave him a look, and he returned to normal. He hurriedly bowed, "A rank 2 spell against a rank 1 spell, this student's victory was just a fluke."

The things that had happened had changed rapidly. The siblings Zi had only seen Nian Bing shoot out three bullets and the flame in Chairman Hei's hand extinguished but because they didn't understand magic, they naturally would not have seen the profound mysteries within.

Chairman Hei nodded to Nian Bing. "Lad, what's your name?"

Nian Bing replied, “My name is Nian Bing.”

Chairman Hei said, “From now on, you are a member of the magic faculty. I’m the chairman of the magic faculty, Hei Ye, a fire magic scholar. Since you’ve chosen magic as your elective, you will have to attend the lecture regularly. Qing Jian, Qing Meng, you leave first. I have somethings to say that can only be said to a new student.”

Zi Qing Meng mind was still blank. She wanted to say something, but when she felt the cold aura emitted from Hei Ye, she knew that this wasn’t the time to talk things over. She could only let go of Hei Ye’s arm and walk out. When she drew abreast of Nian Bing, she whispered to him, “You coward. I will wait for your challenge any time, whether it be in cooking or martial arts.” After saying that, she picked up her pace and pulled her brother away.

With a peng, the classroom door was shut. Only Nian Bing and Magic Scholar Hei Ye remained in the classroom. They didn’t speak but looked at one another. After quite a while, Hei Ye took the initiative to speak. “So you saw it already? I really did not think that in a simple test my secret. Furthermore, your magic control really surpassed my expectation.”

Nian Bing smiled. “Chairman Hei, your magic also greatly surprised me. No wonder Big Brother Qing Jian called you the strongest magic scholar. I didn’t believe at first, but I do now. A dual element magic scholar is naturally the strongest magic scholar. What’s more, the two elements are very complementary.” Yes, the reason he was stunned earlier was because he discovered

Hei Ye's secret. What Hei Ye had prepared to use to block the ice needle was not fire attributed, but the rank 2 earth spell rock skin. This spell could temporarily make your skin as hard as rock. For someone with both fire and earth element cultivation to appear before him, how could he not be surprised?

Hei Ye smiled coolly and replied, "The strongest magic scholar, haha, the strongest magic scholar. I can only be just a magic scholar. Do you think that dual elements is a pleasant thing?"

Nian Bing smiled bitterly and said, "Of course it isn't. If not, then I wouldn't be in such dire straits." while replying, he raised his hands and a fireball appeared on one palm and an iceball on the other.

This time, it was Hei Ye's turn to be shocked. "You? Not possible? Ice, fire, don't tell me you..."

Nian Bing sighed and said, "You are right, I am also a dual element mage. However, I was not as lucky as you as fire and earth do not reject one another. Moreover, one is the strongest defensive element and the other is the strongest attack element. They complement one another and can bring your strength to new heights. However, my two elements could collapse any time." Hei Ye was the first dual element mage he had met, which was why he did not want to hide his greatest secret. He wanted to know the mysteries of cultivating two magics from Hei Ye.

A light flashed in Hei Ye's eyes. After a long while, he said solemnly, "What sort of trash was your teacher? Could it be when you started cultivating magic he didn't see that you possessed two

attributes? Dual cultivating ice and fire does not increase your strength, but means that, at any time, it could take your life.”

Nian Bing said, “Chairman Hei, this has nothing to do with my teacher. When I first started cultivating magic I studied with my father. At that time, I only practiced fire magic. Afterward, my father met with an accident, and I had no one to guide me. I had to fumble about to cultivate for eight years. In these eight years, I subconsciously trained ice magic. Though I discovered the difference afterwards, there was nothing I could do to change it. My teacher said that the two elements are extremely dangerous, but for now, they are not a threat to my life. You’re a dual element mage so is there a way to transform the contradiction between ice and fire?”

“Transform? You won’t transform a damn thing,” said Hei Ye in displeasure. “Some shallow mages think that dual element mages are very strong, but they’re mistaken. Probably, for mages within the same rank, a dual element mage will hold a very strong advantage, but dual element mages have a restriction to their growth. I have lost myself to magic for over sixty years. With my talent, I should have already been able to step into the realm of a magister, but because I cultivate two elements, I will forever remain as a magic scholar, with no way to break through. Do you know why? Because there’s a small restriction between earth and fire, and this tiny restriction affects my ability to climb onto the peak of the magic realm. Although I can reach the level of an ordinary magister with my dual elements, I will forever be unable to use spells that are rank 10 and higher. Only a magister could use a rank 11 forbidden spell and I could never block that. This is the lament of the dual element mage.” When he said this, his emotions were considerably riled up.

Nian Bing looked at Hei Ye in despair. “That is to say, my Ice and Fire Source will never be able exceed its restrictions, and that they will forever be in contention? If I continue to cultivate, as my magic power increases it will become more dangerous?”

Hei Ye nodded and after muttering to himself, he said, “Nian Bing, be honest, what level has your magic power reached now?”

Nian Bing answered, “My magic power has reached an advanced mage, but my magic control is slightly higher than an advanced mage.”

Hei Ye’s eyes were full of surprise. “Advanced mage? I truly am suspicious of how you are alive. That said, you must have a special way of controlling your ice and fire magic. How do you do it?”

Nian Bing did not hide anything when he told Hei Ye his cultivation level. He knew that the magic scholar Hei Ye before him was a more experienced mage than his teacher, Long Zhi. His understanding towards magic would definitely be helpful for him. He was also a dual element mage, so he definitely understood his hardships more than Long Zhi. Even if he is only able to offer a sliver of insight, he might be able to complete his Ice and Fire Source.

Hearing Nian Bing’s narration, Hei Ye’s eyes began to twinkle. “Rotation, so it actually was rotation. You used the centrifugal force of the rotation to make the two extreme magics wrap together without attacking each other. With your body’s natural aptitude for fire and ice, you possess the ability to have the Ice and Fire Source. And just as you had imagined, if the rotation stops,

then your body will definitely have no way of withstanding the collapse of the two magics and you will definitely die. I didn't think that rude Zi Qing Jian would actually bring me such a treasure. You mustn't study culinary arts anymore. From today on, oh, no, starting right now, we will research the mysteries of dual element magic together. If I can help you understand how to complete your Ice and Fire Source, I will definitely be able to become a magister. Today, hearing your cultivation methods have brought me a realization."

For the first time, Hei Ye felt like he had met an old friend. He directly dragged Nian Bing into one of the experiment rooms.

Three months passed and within these three months, Zi Qing Meng was regularly anxious. Especially when she thought of that handsome face. She had always been waiting for Nian Bing to come challenge her. She hadn't believed that her Dense Jade Screen wouldn't be better than Nian Bing's Brocade Character Void Lattice. Although it had been a huge blow when she saw Nian Bing's 'red silk' he left at the culinary faculty, she still felt that she had hope of victory. However, after waiting for three month, there was no challenge, not even a trace of Nian Bing. In these three months, Nian Bing hadn't left the eighth floor of the main building, let alone fulfill his teaching obligations. And Magic Scholar Hei Ye, since Nian Bing came, had not conducted class. All of his classes were handed to his subordinate teachers to finish. According to the magic faculty teachers, Magic Scholar Hei Ye was engaged in some kind of research with Nian Bing. How could a low-ranking mage be so important to Magic Scholar Hei Ye? The most arrogant of the college was no doubt Magic Scholar Hei Ye, so it was really incomprehensible. This Nian Bing must have some kind of mysterious magic.

When she thought this, Zi Qing Meng's heart suddenly swelled with a nameless anger. She forcefully slapped the counter in front of her, scaring everyone around her. "You watch the store; I'm going back to the college." After dropping this sentence, she angrily headed for the back courtyard. She had always been a heavenly beauty in the Orchid Dream College. With her outstanding talent in the two fields of martial arts and culinary arts, she had obtained a great amount of acknowledgement from the teachers. She had also become a teacher of the culinary faculty. However, since Nian Bing appeared, her self-confidence had been shaken. She knew that if she did not defeat Nian Bing, she could not be happy.

"Hello, could you tell me how to get to the Orchid Dream College?" A soft, delicate female voice floated past her ears. Zi Qing Meng subconsciously raised her head to look, and immediately, her pretty body started trembling. She saw a devastatingly beautiful girl wearing blue pants and upper clothes. Her eyes were blue as the sky, and her waterfall-like pink hair cascaded down her back. Her slender and well-proportioned figure gave people a profound profession. Everywhere, she was exactly right. She was simply a masterpiece from heaven. When Zi Qing Meng, who had always boasted about her appearance, saw her, she was actually felt inferior.

"Miss, I know how to get to Orchid Dream College. I could show you for free, how about that?" An obscene voice came from the side; it was the one who brought Nian Bing to the college, Li San'er. His gaze was completely captivated by this blue-clad beauty. His Adam's apple bobbed as he swallowed down a mouthful of spit.

The blue-clad beauty shot a look to the dumbstruck Zi Qing Meng, then said to Li San'er. "Then I will trouble you. Please show me the way."

Li San'er rubbed his hands excitedly. He was about to leave with the blue-clad beauty when Zi Qing Meng's icy voice suddenly cut in. "Li San'er, don't hang about Orchid Dream City. Get lost. Miss, I will show you the way." When Li San discovered Zi Qing Meng's existence, he wanted to protest, but once coming into contact with Zi Qing Meng's ice-cold gaze, he had no guts. He greedily looked at the blue-clad girl's beautiful appearance, and then left dejected.

Zi Qing meng walked up to the blue-clad beauty and saw the red scabbard long sword in her hands. "Miss, do you want to study martial arts at Orchid Dream College? I am also a member of the martial arts faculty."

The blue-clad beauty went blank, then said with a small smile, "It could be said. Then I will trouble you to show me the way."

Zi Qing Meng nodded and did not say anymore. As they headed towards the Orchid Dream College, the blue-clad's beauty attractive force was too strong. Everywhere they passed, her head-turning rate was one hundred percent. As Zi Qing Meng walked next to her, she served as a foil. The blue-clad beauty never dropped her slight smile. Everyone that saw her immediately felt a pure and holy aura from her, and their minds wouldn't even be able to think of obscene thoughts.

Zi Qing Meng's heart was in disarray. In the Orchid Dream College, she had been one of the highest-ranked beauties, so she

never felt such a situation before. Right now she felt like she had become this blue-clad beauty's maid. She told herself, I can't let her enter the Orchid Dream College to study and be compared to me. Right now, she was only hoping that her martial arts were not too great and had no way of passing the test.

The two girls entered the Orchid Dream College. When they arrived in the center of the gigantic mall, the blue-clad beauty suddenly stopped. Zi Qing Meng gave her a look, "How come you're not walking? If you want to enter our martial arts faculty, then you will need to pass the test."

The blue-clad beauty shook her head. "I have not come here to study. I heard that the Orchid Dream College's martial arts faculty is the number one educational institution in the entire continent. I want to challenge the teachers from your college."

"Challenge?" Zi Qing Meng checked whether she had heard wrongly, her beautiful eyes creasing. "You want to challenge the teachers from our college?"

The blue-clad beauty nodded and stabbed her long sword into the ground. She raised her head, shaking her pink hair behind her as a light breeze caressed her hair, causing a faint fragrance to suffuse. She pulled out a silk ribbon from her chest and wrapped it around her hair, looking even more heroic. "I must trouble you. Please, could you call the teachers out?"

Chapter 51.1 - A Battle Of Martial Saints

Zi Qing Meng's face darkened. For many years, there had been no lack of outstanding people who came to challenge the school, but in the end, they returned home defeated. The beauty, whose looks could completely suppress hers, actually came to challenge their teachers. "If you want to challenge our martial arts faculty teachers, then first you must have a go with me." Reaching into her chest area, she pulled out a short blade, one third of a meter long. She suddenly floated backwards, creating a ten meter space between her and the blue-clad beauty. She pulled the short blade out of its scabbard which was covered in a green light. She emitted a strong sword qi.

The blue-clad beauty smiled and said, "You want to accept my challenge? Although your qi isn't weak, you aren't my opponent. Call out your teachers. Because you led me here, I owe you a favor and don't want to move against you."

Zi Qing Meng replied coldly, "You don't owe me anything. Since you want to challenge us, then you must have a match with me first." She waved the short blade in her hand lightly, and the green-covered blade flashed with a hazy luster. The blade emitted a cold aura, and her body was covered by a layer of green qi. Obviously, she held the strength of a swordmaster.

The two beautiful girls stood opposite each other, immediately attracting the attention of the surrounding students. In just a short time, hundreds of Orchid Dream College students had surrounded the two beautiful girls. Some of the quick-witted students immediately went to report to the martial arts faculty teachers.

The blue-clad beauty drew her sword from the ground and smiled indifferently. “Then it’s your move. If you lose, then naturally, your teachers will come out.”

Zi Qing Meng snorted coldly, then glided forward. When she was three meters away, the short blade seemed to come alive. It began to dance in her hands, resembling a ring of green light. Her qi went to entrap her opponent. She began to take winding, small steps, without any rhyme or reason to her steps, resembling a dance. She looked as though she was approaching the blue-clad beauty from all directions.

The blue-clad beauty stood there, still smiling. She hadn’t even unsheathed her longsword from its scabbard as she waited calmly. Suddenly, the green figure vanished, and a dense, green light erupted. The green ball of light turned into countless knife shadows, covering her body.

The blue-clad beauty didn’t move her feet, but flicked her wrist slightly. A dark-red light and a scorching wind enveloped the sheathed longsword as she lifted it up. Her qi was collected around her scabbard without being flashy unlike Zi Qing Meng’s qi that cloaked herself. The sword scabbard took on a piercing as it headed straight for Zi Qing Meng’s knife shadows.

“Combine—” shouted Zi Qing meng in a high-pitched voice. A strange scene appeared before their eyes. The chaotic green knife shadows suddenly converged onto a single path. The mirage disappeared, revealing the short blade in Zi Qing Meng’s hands. The blade was made up entirely of green metal. The knife handle

was 16 centimeters long and the blade was 26 centimeters long. The top end stuck up slightly. Under the light of the sun, it sparkled rather coldly.

The pause only lasted for an instant, then Zi Qing Meng snorted and took five steps backward. At the moment, the blue-clad beauty had returned to her position with her sword in the ground, like she had never moved in the first place. “Good knife technique, which is well suited to the speed of your knife. You can make use of your energy to condense everything into one point, making up for the fact that you lack qi. It’s just a pity that even though you have a good knife technique, you’ve only just entered the swordmaster realm. There’s no way you can bring out the entire strength of the knife technique. As I said, you are not my opponent. Now call out your teachers.”

At the moment, Zi Qing Meng’s expression was just like her blade. Her qi and blood inside her was boiling as a scorching aura continued to surge forth. She didn’t dare speak for fear of losing her control over her qi. Her opponent’s fire attributed qi had invaded her body.

“What are these people doing standing around here? Eek, Little Meng, are you okay?” Zi Qing Jian’s massive figure appeared, and the surrounding students got out of his way. He took large strides up to Zi Qing Meng. When he saw the blue-clad beauty, Zi Qing Jian stalled. He clearly felt his heart beating faster. This year, he was twenty-seven years old. In these twenty-seven years, this was the first time his heart had beat faster because of a woman. He couldn’t believe that this girl had looks beat his sister by a large margin. As she stood there, she emitted a proud and profound feeling like a lofty mountain. The unshakeable feeling gave him an

extremely profound impression. The smile on her face was warm and her blue, blue eyes were like crystals.

“Big Bro,” said Zi Qing Meng, her voice hoarse. Her call made Zi Qing Jian recover his senses. When he found that his sister was out of sorts, he placed a hand to his little sister’s shoulder and inserted qi into her body. Zi Qing Meng’s facial expression looked better and her short blade regained its luster. “Little Sister, what happened to you?” asked Zi Qing Jian with curiosity.

Zi Qing Meng’s eyes held a hint of hatred. “Big Bro, she came here to challenge us. You should fight her; you will definitely beat her.”

Zi Qing Jian suddenly looked at the blue-clad beauty. “You came here to challenge us? It was you who hurt my little sister?”

The blue-clad beauty smiled and said, “No, I didn’t harm her. I only shook her internal qi a bit. If your strength is almost the same as hers, then go call your teacher.”

Hearing the beautiful girl’s gorgeous voice, Zi Qing Jian felt his face getting hot. “I-I am a teacher here at the college.” his voice wasn’t as bold as it was normally.

A light flashed in the blue-clad beauty’s eyes, and she raised her longsword. “Then please fight me. With blades or with fists, you choose.”

Zi Qing Jian coughed and calmed himself. “Blades are no good. Let’s do barehanded fighting. My hands are heavier, so you must be careful.”

The blue-clad beauty smiled indifferently. “Is that so? Then I would like to try.” She flicked her wrist and half of the sheathed longsword imbedded itself in the ground without any sound. She took a step forward and her expression changed. Her warm smile was nowhere to be seen, replaced by a calm expression. She planted her feet. Her fists were like knives, one in front and one behind in front of her chest.

Since he was young, Zi Qing Jian had been a martial arts idiot. When he felt his opponent’s aura, stable as a mountain, he no longer saw a beautiful girl in front of him. His right foot immediately planted forward, and all of his bones crackled. A violent green qi flew from his body and enveloped him. It was as if a whirlpool-like wall had appeared in front of him. For the nimble and speedy wind element to have turned into this raging tempest, he was definitely a freak.

In the main teaching building, a pair of men, one old and one young, walked out of the main gate. Hei Ye stretched, “I’m old, so old. My body actually is somewhat unable to withstand these three months.” The pair striding out of the building was actually Nian Bing and Hei Ye, who had been working hard on their magic research. The two people’s faces were somewhat wan, like they hadn’t seen the sun for a long while.

Nian Bing smiled and said, “Teacher, you shouldn’t say that. With your spirit power, how could you feel tired?” In these three

months, he had reaped a lot. Due to him realizing that comprehension of the foundations were important, he didn't research magic arrays, but studied the process of dual element cultivation with Hei Ye. When he had time, he would submerge himself in meditation, spending at least fifteen hours everyday in meditation. In these three months, he had learn a number of things from Hei Ye, especially about using dual element magic. Hei Ye's magic knowledge was extremely profound, so much so even Long Zhi could not compare. Breathing the fresh air from the mall, he clearly sensed that he had become stronger.

Hei Ye made a small noise of surprise. "What's going on there? Why are so many people gathered there! The atmosphere isn't good! Little Nian Bing, we must check it out."

Nian Bing smiled. "Teacher, don't you dislike fuss the most? Yesterday I remember you saying that being alone is the most peaceful and that a peaceful environment, is better for improving your magic."

Hei Ye shot Nian Bing a look. "You brat, everything is subject to change. If you're always alone, it would be strange if you didn't cultivate a loner personality." His tone outwardly seemed rebuking, but the tenderness in it was extremely obvious. In the past three months, the gains in Nian Bing's magic strength were obvious. At the same time, Hei Ye had also gained much knowledge about dual element magic from Nian Bing's fresh ideas. He secretly felt that a window for breakthrough had appeared in the problem that he had always thought was impossible to solve. Right now, all he needed was a flash of comprehension and he would be able to break into the magister realm. There might not even be one dual element mage out of ten thousand. Hei Ye extremely admired Nian

Bing's talent and intelligence. He already regarded Nian Bing as his disciple.

Nian Bing smiled. "Master, you have worked hard these days, and your disciple hasn't been able to repay you. Let's go over to the culinary faculty; I will make you a delicious meal."

Hei Ye's eyes twinkled. He grinned and said, "I almost forgot, you brat are also a student of the culinary faculty. No matter, you've already delayed for three months. I'll talk with Zi Xiu, that old lecher." A yellow light came from his body. He lightly pressed his hands to the ground, and the earth element quickly condensed. Suddenly, a protrusion appeared in the surface of the mall, pushing him and Nian Bing up until they were three meters in the air.

"Teacher, although you are a magic scholar, you can even instantaneously cast rank 3 spells. You are amazing!" Nian Bing was half true half false patting Hei Ye's horse's butt. As his gaze fell on the crowd of students on the mall, he couldn't help but tremble, "How could she be here?"

From his vantage point, Hei Ye looked down at the scene on the center of the mall. "What a beautiful girl! Do you know her?"

Nian Bing nodded. "Yes! She is my friend." The blue-clad beauty wasn't just anyone; she was Feng Nu, who had been separated from him for months. Why was she here? Could it be she was looking for him like Xue Jing? No way! Feng Nu couldn't know where he was. He continued watching with with puzzled emotions. At this moment, Feng Nu and Zi Qing Jian were fighting.

Zi Qing Jian took a half step forward as his right hand traced a half arc on his abdomen, slowly pushing outwards to Feng Nu. Green qi condensed without dissipating. He yelled and his qi condensed into a green orb of light, suddenly charging at Feng Nu. When he saw this scene, Nian Bing's heart couldn't help but constrict. Because it was too far, he wouldn't be able to save Feng Nu.

Feng Nu suddenly made a strange gesture. She raised her right hand with four fingers hanging down, her hand and forearm at a right angle. In an instant, her hand had turned a fiery red. She watched the green ball of qi approach her and didn't move but. Instead, she slapped it with her palm. When her hand came in contact with the orb of qi, an ear-blasting explosion occurred. The contact between fire element qi and wind element qi had produced an enormous force, and a circular wave ripped through the air. Immediately, the students that crowded around them had fell over. Luckily, they only received light injuries. When they curious students had sensed danger, they stepped back, giving Feng Nu and Zi Qing Jian a larger berth.

Hei ye looked at the scene and said in surprise, "That boy Qing Jian's qi is progressing very quickly! However, that girl's qi is a bit strange. It can somehow neutralize Qing Jian's qi."

The vibrations produced by the clashing qi vanished. Feng Nu had not moved from her initial position, still in the pose from before. On the other hand, Zi Qing Jian's expression had changed, and he was standing one meter away from where he had attacked. There were two deep grooves on the ground, indicating that he couldn't block the wave and was forced backwards.

Feng Nu smiled and said, “Not bad. Your qi is very simple and honest, however it’s still too weak. If you don’t have a more amazing ability, then call out your teachers or your principal.”

Zi Qing Jian’s expression turned more serious. He knew that he was representing the honor of the college and couldn’t let himself be defeated so easily. “Take my next move.” Wrapped in green qi, Zi Qing Jian soared into the air; at this moment, his qi reached an extreme point. His large hands formed claw shapes and when he reached sixteen meters in the air, he descended onto Feng Nu like an eagle swooping for its prey. He yelled, “Take my Life Tearing Heavy – Eagle – Hand–!” In order to achieve victory, he brought out his ultimate move.

Feng Nu’s expression also turned serious. She tiptoed on the ground and faced Zi Qing Jian. Her arms moved rhythmically like wings, and red qi dyed the surroundings red. She lifted her arms straight up, planning to directly block Zi Qing Jian’s Heavy Eagle Hand.

Nian Bing couldn’t endure it. He tore open a snowstorm scroll, and the duo soared into the air. Zha Ji once said that the Heavy Eagle Hand could change its weight at will. When using heavy moded, it could easily tear apart anyone. At this moment, he suddenly discovered that Feng Nu held an important position in his heart. He no longer cared about anything else and wanted to save her.

But did Feng Nu really need his saving? Although Nian Bing moved very quickly, he couldn’t reach her in time. Her delicate,

beautiful red hands lightly pressed against the Heavy Eagle Hand, which was raging with violent qi. A clear, resonant cry of a phoenix emanated from Feng Nu. When the two separated, their hands had collided over a hundred times in a single instant. As Feng Nu speedily returned to the ground, Zi Qing Jian was sent flying away.

Chapter 51.2 - A Battle Of Martial Saints

Nian Bing ran over, catching Zi Qing Jian in mid-air. Using the snowstorm, he lowered himself onto the ground. He sensed that Zi Qing Jian's breathing was unstable and his large and powerful hands were actually trembling. He couldn't help but think, Did Feng Nu win?

When he landed on the ground, Feng Nu saw Nian Bing and looked at him in surprise. "What are you doing here?" From this question, Nian Bing knew that Feng Nu hadn't come for him.

Once Zi Qing Jian landed on the ground, he looked at Feng Nu and said sincerely, "I have lost. Thank you Miss for being lenient." Previously, when the two were exchanging blows mid-air, Feng Nu's qi had completely suppressed him, giving her at least three different opportunities to crush his throat. Other people might not have seen it, but how could he not?

Feng Nu smiled slightly and replied, "Your Heavy Eagle Hand is truly powerful. It could make up for your lack of qi, but sadly the difference between your qi and mine is much too great. If not, I wouldn't have been so certain in beating you, but as expected, the Orchid Dream College is a place of hidden dragons and crouching tigers."

Nian Bing stood between the two. "Feng Nu, why did you duel Big Brother Qing Jian?"

"She came to challenge us," Zi Qing Meng answered in a cold

voice. When she found out that Nian Bing and Feng Nu were actually acquainted, a wave of irritation rose in her heart.

“Challenge? Feng Nu, you...” Nian Bing looked at her in surprise.

Feng Nu laughed and said, “I can’t come to challenge the school? I want to raise my martial arts higher and true battles are the best method for that, so I came here. Nian Bing, what about you?”

Nian Bing said, “I came to to study cooking and magic. You’ve already fought with Zi Qing Jian. Don’t fight any more, why is there a need for hurting others?”

Feng Nu’s eyes flashed. “Nian Bing, I hope that you won’t interfere in my business. Until I am defeated, I will continue.”

Nian Bing frowned. He felt Feng Nu’s determination. At this moment, he really did not where he should stand. On the side, Zi Qing Meng said scornfully, “Aren’t you a mage? As a member of the college, you have the duty to help the college against challengers. If you have the ability, defeat her.”

Feng Nu looked at Nian Bing with interest and asked with a grin, “You want to go against me?”

Nian Bing was stunned for a moment, but then his eyes sparkled. “Okay, I’ll accept your challenge in place of the college. Although I’m not a warrior, this is also my duty.”

Feng Nu asked in surprised, “You’ll really fight with me?”

Nian Bing replied with a laugh, “Can’t I? I never thought that your martial arts were strong enough to even beat Big Brother Qing Jian. However, I still want to have a go.”

Feng Nu laughed. She already understood Nian Bing’s intentions and shook her head lightly. “You! I won’t go easy on you easy.”

Nian Bing turned to the Zi siblings. “Step back, please. I’ll accept her challenge on behalf of the college.”

Zi Qing Jian asked, “But aren’t you her friend?”

Nian Bing smiled. “Friends can also exchange pointers. You should step back.” Turning to face Feng Nu, two lights flashed in his hands successively. The Ice and Snow Goddess’ Sigh and the Flame God’s Roar were held in either hand.

Feng Nu drew her Heavenly Flame Sword from the ground and pointed the sheathed sword at Nian Bing. “Let’s go.”

The light in Nian Bing’s eyes became sharper as he concentrated. “Feng Nu, you’re the first person I will use the full strength of the Ice and Fire Source against. My attack will leave no openings for you.”

Feng Nu laughed. “A warrior’s speed is a mage’s greatest threat. I will see how you’re able to respond to my attacks. Careful.” After

speaking, she floated into the air as if flying, and in a flash, she had arrived in front of Nian Bing with the sheathed sword directly aiming for his shoulder.

Nian Bing didn't move. When he saw the tip of the sheath almost touch him, he suddenly raised the Morning Dew Knife upwards. Was he going to use the knife to stop the Heavenly Flame Sword? Of course not. Even Zi Qing Jian's Heavy Eagle Hand could not match Feng Nu's qi. How could he take her sword? The Morning Dew Knife emitted a greenish-blue haze which aimed for Feng Nu's wrist, ignoring the sheathed sword headed for his shoulder.

He couldn't block Feng Nu's qi even if there were one hundred Nian Bing's, but the Morning Dew Knife could. The Morning Dew Knife with the Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh appellation was the antithesis to Feng Nu's qi. When it turned to strike her fire-attributed qi, Feng Nu didn't dare to let his knife cut her. However, the Heavenly Flame Sword was very long, and she was certain that she could dodge his knife. So her qi was still contained and continued to cut down. However, Nian Bing smiled and a surge of ice condensed, forming an ice wall in front of the sword as it was about to hit him. The Morning Dew continued to slash forward, splitting into ten directions. A barrage of icy blades cut down at Feng Nu's arm.

At this moment, if Feng Nu were to release her qi, the rank 4 ice wall would definitely be unable to hold against it. However, Nian Bing's Morning Dew Knife would also cut her arm, so she didn't have the time to release her qi. Helpless, she could only protect herself, flipping the Heavenly Flame Sword to block Nian Bing's Morning Dew Knife.

Nian Bing didn't have qi, so if the two blades clashed, the Morning Dew Knife might be shaken intensely to the point it would be flung away. However, although he did not have qi, when talking about speed of the knife, he was even faster than Feng Nu. If he can stick out his knife quickly, he can pull it back just as quickly. When Feng Nu was trying to protect herself, he pulled back his knife and the ice wall instantly became bigger, blocking Feng Nu path. He quickly moved back several paces, and chanted urgently, "Mighty Ice and Snow Goddess! Please, lend me your anger to send me onto the opposite bank-Snowstorm."

Under the influence of the Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh, a snowstorm quickly appeared in front of Nian Bing. Although the spell had formed quickly, it could not be compared to the movement speed of a warrior. When the snowstorm was half-formed, the ice wall shattered. Nian Bing did not get flustered. He pointed the Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh and the Flame God's Roar in front of him, and a fireball and ice ball quickly flew out, blocking Feng Nu's way.

She waved the sword lightly, and two red lights floated out to attack his magic, she speeding along behind it. Right at this moment, the two spells suddenly came to a standstill. In the next moment, they collided,. At the moment of contact, Feng Nu's attack hit.

A violent shockwave shook the air, causing Feng Nu's forward momentum to come to a halt. Red qi suddenly burst forth, blocking all of the explosive power. However, the two extremes of ice and fire had given her no small amount of trouble in her moment of carelessness, making her lose the opportunity to chase after Nian Bing. From far away, Magic Scholar Hei Ye sighed, "A

good Ice and Fire Source spell.”

The snowstorm lifted Nian Bing up. Once a mage was airborne, the circumstances may not be so advantageous for the warrior. Of course, without the strength of the advanced mage it would be difficult to fly, especially for fire and earth mages as It was impossible for them to fly.

While floating in the air, Nian Bing stopped to look at Feng Nu and grinned. “Do you still want to continue? Or have we tied?”

Feng Nu said ill-temperedly, “Keep dreaming. Do you believe that you can beat me like this? If I remember correctly, snowstorm can’t fly too high and the duration is short.”

Hearing her words, Nian Bing laughed. “Since it was like that, please take my attack.” The rank 1 fireball and ice ball flew down from the air, with the divine blades acting as magic wands.

Feng Nu snorted and finally unsheathed the Heavenly Flame Sword. A fiery red light flashed and expanded. Under the prompting of her qi, the red light grew to three meters. At this point, if the Ice and Fire Source were to cause an explosion or if it lacked the time to, nothing could avoid the curtain of red light. The Ice and Fire Source had become stronger, but a rank 1 based spell couldn’t defeat a warrior as strong as Feng Nu.

Seeing the intense light from the sword, the Zi siblings couldn’t help but gasp. Such wild and intense qi with the glittering red sword wasn’t something they could stop. This was Feng Nu’s true

strength! Zi Qing Meng whispered to her brother, “Is she a martial master?”

Zi Qing Jian nodded and replied, “Not only is she a martial master, she’s close to being a martial saint. How much could she have trained to reach that level at her age?”

Nian Bing looked at Feng Nu with a bitter smile. His attack had been halted, should he use a higher ranked spell to attack? Nian Bing was somewhat surprised at himself. What if he hurt Feng Nu? But once you are riding the tiger it is difficult to get off. Feng Nu obviously didn’t to stop. So what should he do now?

Feng Nu looked at Nian Bing and lifted up her Heavenly Flame Sword slowly. “Nian Bing, don’t be lenient. Let me see what level your magic has reached.”

Just as Nian Bing was hesitating on whether or not he should continue the fight, a hoarse voice rang out behind him. “Nian Bing, come down now. I think this young lady has come to Orchid Dream to find me.”

At the moment, the mall was already crowded with a thousand students, but the wizened voice was heard by everyone. Looking from above, Nian Bing saw the crowd of people recede to the sides like waves. A tall, but somewhat stooped old man slowly walked into the center. He knew this old person. It was the old man who was sweeping the ground three months before that made him realize the importance of basics!

“Principal, principal...” respectful voices resounded nonstop. The old man smiled and looked at the students around him. When he reached the inner ring, the Zi siblings lowered their heads respectfully. “Father.”

Nian Bing almost fell to the ground. He hadn’t thought that the old man sweeping the grounds before was Zi Qing Jian and Zi Qing Meng’s father, as well as the head of the martial arts faculty and the principal of the Orchid Dream College.

The old man looked at Feng Nu who was gripping the Heavenly Flame Sword. With a smile, he said, “Young lady, I spoke correctly, right? Your seniors definitely told you to find a man called Zi Meng. I am Zi Meng.”

Feng Nu responded by pulling back the Heavenly Flame Sword. She nodded to Zi Meng. “Hello, Principal. I have come here to exchange pointers with you.”

Zi Meng smiled. “Your seniors really cannot let an old man like me go! Since it’s like that, then I accept.”

Feng Nu shot Nian Bing a glance, who already landed on the ground. Suddenly, her focus became more severe and red qi surged forth, dyeing her body with flames. Right at this moment, the ground suddenly trembled, and the surrounding one hundred meters around Feng Nu and Zi Meng suddenly burst upwards. The surrounding students could only see the earth leave the ground until it reached three meters. Zi Meng looked in the direction of the teaching building. “Thank you, old fellow.” The only one who could use earth magic to so perfectly create a stage was Nian Bing’s

newly acknowledged teacher, Hei Ye.

Hei Ye's voice rang from far away. "Old Zi, don't be shameful!" It was unknown when it happened, but Zi Xiu appeared next to him, surveying the scene from far away.

Zi Meng did not say anything but made an inviting gesture toward Feng Nu. Feng Nu's expression didn't change at all from the sudden change in the surroundings. Her Nine Flame Qi was burning even more intensely. She lifted the Heavenly Flame Sword slowly and suddenly moved. She brandished her long sword, glowing red, she charged, cutting down at Zi Meng. The instant she left her original position, the qi around her body changed from red to a faint silver. With her sword pulling her forward, she was very quick, a silver blur in the air.

Nian Bing did not understand much about martial arts, but he heard Zi Qing Jian mutter, "That's holy qi from the martial saint realm. Although it's not quite strong, she's definitely stepped into the gates."

A similar silver light came from Zi Meng but it was much more deep than Feng Nu's and naturally parried Feng Nu's attack. Without a sound, the silver light from Feng Nu's body exploded suddenly, lightning fast. It was very difficult to see what their fight looked like from the outside.

Nian Bing asked Zi Qing Jian quietly, "Big Brother Qing Jian, what is holy qi?"

Zi Qing Jian explained, “Holy qi is said to be the highest realm a warrior can reach. No matter what sort of attributed qi you cultivate, once you reach the martial saint realm the color will turn silver. This is the characteristic of a martial saint! Except for the legendary gold divine qi of martial gods, holy qi is the strongest. My father reached the martial saint realm fifteen years ago, when he was forty-seven and was hailed as the youngest martial saint. From then on, the Orchid Dream College’s fame shook the continent, especially since he became the sixth martial saint out of the Seven Holy Ones. But that girl seems to be no more than twenty years old and has already stepped into the martial saint realm. It’s truly impossible to believe.”

Chapter 52.1 - Feng Nu, Almost A Martial Saint

Martial saint? Martial saints and magisters corresponded with one another. When he heard what Zi Qing Jian said, Nian Bing was dumbstruck as he himself hadn't even reached the realm of a magic scholar. Furthermore, Feng Nu was already close to achieving the martial saint realm, equal to a magister. Holy qi. God, it was just laughable, that he actually was thinking about stopping her from battling. This was just him misunderstanding his own strength. With her qi cultivation, he couldn't even dodge her attack with his snowstorm! His heart was thrown into confusion. The pair on the stage were already fiercely fighting and vanished. He was about to ask about it when he suddenly heard two piercing sounds, like qi slicing through the air.

Two figures floated down onto the earthen stage. Zi Meng still looked the same as before, but Feng Nu's face was obviously much paler. Her qi, around her body, was the color of flames. It looked as if her clothes and pink hair were in disarray. Her ample chest was heaving. She saw Zi Meng's eyes flash. Silence, an eerie silence befell the entire mall.

"I lost," Feng Nu said calmly.

Zi Meng smiled slightly and replied, "Although I am on the upswing, victory has not been decided. You still have a chance to draw."

Feng Nu shook her head and responded, "No, I was using the Heavenly Flame Sword to force myself to be your equal. If you had

a weapon, I would have lost long before. Instead of saying it would be a draw, it would be more of a mutual destruction. I will try again one day.”

Zi Meng smiled. “There is no need for you return Ten years from now, your martial arts will surpass mine. Your seniors have finally raised someone with an innate Nine Flames Body. However, your weak points lie in not able to temper your personality. If you can stay indifferent to any humiliation and go with the flow, then even if I had a weapon, beating you wouldn’t be easy. After you go back, tell them, the bet from that year is my loss. If there is a chance, have them come find me for a drink. I will have Zi Xiu personally cook for them. I haven’t seen them for many years. How are they doing?”

Feng Nu’s eyes gleamed with respect “The elders are doing very well. Many thanks to senior for the pointers and fighting with this junior. Feng Nu has learned a lot.”

Zi Meng smiled. “If you wish, you may remain at the college to train. I could teach you some things.”

Her eyes flashed, and she shook her head. “Thank you for the offer, but I have other things I need to do. I have to leave as soon as possible.”

Zi Meng replied, “That’s fine. Remember to speak well of me to your seniors.”

Feng Nu nodded .and just as she was about to jump down from

the platform, a silhouette flashed. The aura of magic suddenly concentrated around the earthen stage. Nian Bing had flown onto it. “Feng Nu, can you wait a moment before you leave?”

Feng Nu’s mind went blank. “Nian Bing, you...”

Nian Bing grinned. “I haven’t seen you for months, and I want to make you something to eat. A meal shouldn’t waste too much of your time.”

“Okay! I haven’t eaten any tasty food in days.” Looking at Nian Bing again, her heart was happy. This time, she had already shown Nian Bing her full strength. She thought that Nian Bing might have resented her for that, but it seemed that he was not unsatisfied at all.

Nian Bing turned to look at Zi Meng and said respectfully, “President, many thanks for your pointer that day. I have gained a lot from that. Today, I have a matter I would like to trouble you with.”

Zi Meng chuckled and replied, “Lad, for you to be so young and to have reached such heights as an Ice and Fire Mage, your future prospects are limitless. Go ahead and ask.”

Nian Bing’s eyes gleamed. He asked seriously, “I want to ask you to preside over a competition. There is someone I want to challenge.”

“Challenge?” Zi Meng was stunned for a moment. “Who is it you want to challenge?”

Nian Bing smiled lightly and replied, “I would like to challenge the chairman of the culinary faculty, Senior Camel Chef Zi Xiu. I hope you will agree.”

Zi Meng laughed. “I heard from Zi Xiu that you are the successor of the Demon Chef. However, even if you were to win against Zi Xiu, what would be the meaning in that? Wouldn’t it be better to exchange pointers with one another? There’s no need to have such a serious challenge.”

Nian Bing shook his head. “No, this is very important to me. Senior Zi Xiu said that if I could beat him, he would tell me something.”

Zi Meng’s eyes shone in surprise. At the moment, Camel Chef Zi Xiu bounded forward and walked onto the platform. “Boy, you really want to challenge me? I did say that you needed to win against my two disciples first before you had the right to challenge me.”

Nian Bing said calmly, “Senior Zi Xiu, that isn’t a problem. With my skills, Big Bro Qing Jian and Miss Qing Meng cannot beat me. This, I am confident of.”

Zi Xiu hehe’d. “What’s the source of your confidence?”

Nian Bing raised his head and looked straight at him. In a level voice, he answered, “Magic.”

“Magic?” Zi Xiu looked at Nian Bing with surprise. Nian Bing nodded his head and confirmed his answer, “It’s magic.”

Zi Xiu sank into deep thought. After a long while, he said, “So what you mean to say is that you want integrate magic into cooking? Where did Zha Ji that old fellow fall down from?!”

Nian Bing said, “Currently, I should have the qualifications to challenge you. Integrating magic and cooking is my greatest advantage. Most likely, I’m far from you in terms of heat control, but using the special properties of magic, I can make things that you would never be able to. Thus, I am confident in myself.”

Camel Chef Zi Xiu turned to Zi Meng. “Big Brother, will you approve his challenge? I want to see how much of Zha Ji’s skills he’s learned. Nian Bing, I’ll wait for you in the college’s restaurant.” His tone dropped and he jumped gracefully. Green qi granted him instant speed as he flitted over the tops the student body’s heads. By just touching the ground a few times, he had already disappeared from sight. Although he wasn’t a martial saint like his brother, his martial arts had reached the realm of a martial master.

Zi Meng’s gaze was profound as he looked at Nian Bing and suddenly broke into a smile. “It’s been a long time since I saw Little Brother Xiu so serious. Youngster, work hard! I hope to try your magic-infused delicacies. Old Hei, please come with us, as well as Miss Feng.”

Nian Bing, Zi Meng, Feng Nu, as well as Zi Qing Jian and his younger sister, and Magic Scholar Hei Ye left the college together. They went to the restaurant where Nian Bing had been taken to by Li San. Although the students wanted to see the battle of dragons and tigers, the restaurant was only so big. Additionally, Zi Meng's strict orders did not let anyone to skip class so they could only sigh helplessly.

Nian Bing smiled, and his heart was resolute. It was Feng Nu's challenge to Zi Meng that had roused his desire to win. He knew very clearly that even though Feng Nu challenged Zi Meng, she knew for sure that she wasn't his opponent. However, she didn't shrink back, instead bringing out her full strength against Zi Meng.

And in his challenge against Zi Xiu, he had somewhat of a chance of victory. Why would he wait? He had already delayed quite some time in the college, and the date of the Rising Mage Tournament was quickly approaching. In these three months, he finally found some of the secrets to truly fusing his Ice and Fire Source. He only had to go to Profound Orchid City to complete the task Luo Rou entrusted to him before he could cultivate in peace. A place like the college wasn't suitable for him as he was used to a free lifestyle. Any sort of restriction made him uncomfortable. So, Nian Bing chose to challenge Zi Xiu in front of the principal, Zi Meng.

When they arrived at the restaurant, Zi Xiu had already changed into his chef attire. He looked at Nian Bing. "Boy, you choose the competition method, lest you say that the old was bullying the young."

Nian Bing smiled and said, “It said that in the battle, it’s about the quality of the soldier, not the quantity. Our culinary skills must also be used as such. You and I will compete in one dish, our specialty dishes. If everyone here would be the judge and decided the victor. I hope that you will not forget what was said earlier. If I win, you must tell me who my master’s enemy is.”

Zi Xiu snorted and said, “You, boy, are full of confidence! When I became famous, you weren’t even born.”

Nian Bing laughed. “Senior Zi Xiu, are you scared?”

Zi Xiu’s heart shook. Yes, when he saw the youngster full of confidence before them, why would his confidence disappear? A light flashed in his eyes, and his lost posturing returned. “I will give you an hour to choose the ingredients you need. After an hour, we will determine the victor. I want to see the best dish you can make and how you much of your master’s teachings you have learnt.”

Nian Bing nodded and replied, “Okay. This junior also wants to ask advice from the Camel Chef God.”

Feng Nu walked up to Nian Bing and grinned. “Do you need my help?”

Nian Bing shook his head. “No, just wait for the food. After leaving Master, I haven’t put my all into making a dish. Today I will have you try my Ice and Fire Banquet. I believe that I will

definitely win.”

Zi Xiu said, “Nian Bing, I won’t take you lightly. Little Meng, you’re responsible for preparing my ingredients. Qing Jian, you help with Nian Bing’s. No matter what he needs, as long as it can be bought in the city, bring it to him.”

Zi Qing Jian stood by Nian Bing. “Brother, what ingredients do you need?”

Nian Bing laughed. He told him to fetch him a paper and pen and wrote down in detail the things he needed and passed the paper to Zi Qing Jian. Zi Qing Jian skimmed over the paper and immediately went to go buy the items. Zi Meng and Zi Xiu were chatting to the side. Hei Ye was also at the side with his eyes shut, perhaps meditating or dozing off. It was in the afternoon, and not many people were in the restaurant where a showdown at the pinnacle of the culinary realm was about to unfold.

“Feng Nu, weren’t you going the Lang Mu Empire? Why did you come here to challenge Principal Zi Meng?” Nian Bing asked quietly.

Feng Nu looked at him and said, “I finished my business there. I was going to travel the continent and challenge experts to improve my own martial arts. And you? Why did you come here?”

Nian Bing said, “I was originally planning on going to Profound Orchid City, but I heard that the Profound Orchid Empire was at war with the Harmonic Flower and the Qi Lu Empire so I came

here first. I haven't seen you for many months; you seemed to have become more beautiful."

When she saw Nian Bing grin, Feng Nu's face flushed a pretty red. "When did you learn to be such a smooth-talker. The war ended a month ago. The empires were just posturing, however I heard that the Profound Orchid Empire took significant losses. Several cities had been plundered. In the end, it was not until the Ice Moon Empire's Ice God Pagoda's mages and the trump card of the empire, the cavalry, came was the battle finally ended. The Profound Orchid Empire wanted to revenge, but the Harmonic Flower and Qi Lu Empires had already retreated back behind their borders and are assembling a large military force. Because the border cities were plundered, the Profound Orchid Empire's resources haven't been able to keep up. Ice Moon Empire also mobilized a force, but in the end nothing could be resolved. However, this time the war seems to indicate that the continent will no longer be peaceful."

Nian Bing spoke with suspicion, "Then what about the Lang Mu Empire? Didn't they participate in the fight? According to what I heard, the Lang Mu Empire has a bad relationship with the Harmonic Flower Empire. The two countries share a border; wouldn't this be a good opportunity for them to exploit? If the three great empires combined their strength, they would be able to defeat the Harmonic Flower and Qi Lu Empire.

Feng Nu's eyes glowed. "How could it be that simple? The Harmonic Flower Empire's strength is much greater than you imagine. They have countless experts. Though they were the aggressors against Profound Orchid, their Flame Lion Cavalry were stationed at the border with the Lang Mu Empire. The Lang Mu

Empire tried to attack, but it's no wonder Flame Lions are the number one cavalry team. Not only did they easily defend the country's border, they managed to make the Lang Mu Empire eat not just a small loss. For now, the war has temporarily stopped. For the time being, there shouldn't be any fighting. As for what will happen in the future, that's hard to say. Nian Bing, are you really certain about beating the Camel Chef?"

Nian Bing smiled bitterly and shook his head. He said seriously, "How could I be certain? The Camel Chef God has been famed for over thirty years and is ranked third out of the Five Chef Gods. My knowledge of Senior Zi Xiu is limited to master's description, which was from twenty years ago. Heaven knows what kind of new discoveries Senior Zi Xiu has made. I can only try my hardest. My advantage is magic, and my chance of victory is only fifty-fifty. However, I have a way to increase my winning chances, which depends on you helping me or not."

Feng Nu stared blankly and asked doubtfully, "Me? What can I help you with? You know that I can only cook congee. I'll just trouble you."

Nian Bing was still as serious before. "No, you can help me a lot! As a good chef, whether my mood is good and bad can determine whether I can completely bring out my culinary skill. If you help me, I can throw myself into cooking. A cheerful mood will naturally produce a more delicious food. I just don't know if you want to help or not."

Feng Nu smiled, "This is related to the whereabouts of your enemy's master, so no matter what you say, I will definitely help

you.”

Chapter 52.2 - Feng Nu, Almost A Martial Saint

Nian Bing's handsome face shifted from a serious expression to a slight smile. "It's simple. I will be delighted, of course, if you promise to let me kiss you after I've won," he said in a low voice.

Feng Nu blushed heavily upon hearing Nian Bing's unexpected words. "Hey, you're taking advantage of me!" She made as if to strike him.

Nian Bing quickly dodged. "Don't hit me! I can't take your holy qi. I wasn't joking earlier, it really is the truth! If you don't believe me, give it a try and see."

"You're annoying. Who said anything about giving it a try? I'll ignore you if you say it again," Feng Nu snorted.

"Alright, alright, I'll stop. Feng Nu, your blushing face is really cute," Nian Bing laughed. Ever since reuniting with Feng Nu, he had felt a particular urge. For some reason, his heart was full of thoughts of Feng Nu, the nervousness he should have for the upcoming match with the Camel Chef God was missing. With her attention, he felt his confidence sharply rising, while his body felt invigorated.

While still blushing, Feng Nu glared at him. "Stop joking around, don't you need to make preparations for your upcoming dishes? I trust in your ability; just as students will surpass their teacher, seniors will eventually be replaced by the younger generation. This

is a very good chance for you. By winning this match, you will gain the confidence to push your culinary skills to the next level. Your skills can only improve under the pressure of facing experts, just like how I practice martial arts against masters to progress further. Perhaps, few years from now, the continent will no longer remember the Five Great Chef Gods, and only the Magic Chef of Ice and Fire,” she said quietly.

Nian Bing was touched by Feng Nu’s encouragement. This was a true friend! Providing encouragement during crucial moments will invariably be extremely helpful. Nian Bing clenched his fist and nodded resolutely at Feng Nu, then wordlessly proceeded to meditate on the chair beside him. In order to bring out his full potential, he would need to maintain a peak mental state.

When Nian Bing opened his eyes an hour later, everything had been fully prepared. The restaurant’s kitchen was divided into two fully-equipped sections, with Feng Nu, Zi Meng, Zi Qing Jian, Zi Qing Meng and Hei Ye seated in a row by the wall. Camel Chef Zi Xiu appeared to have completed his preparations and was mulling over something behind the kitchen counter.

Standing up, Nian Bing nodded slightly towards Zi Xiu. “Senior, let us begin.”

“Alright,” acknowledged Zi Xiu, “Let’s set the time limit to one hour. It should be enough for you to display your skills since there’s only one dish to be prepared.”

“It’s definitely enough. After you, Senior,” Nian Bing agreed with a smile. Before he could walk towards the kitchen counter on his

side, Feng Nu's voice piped up. "Nian Bing, wait a moment."

Feng Nu got up as Nian Bing looked back with a confused expression. Her figure flashed, and in the next instant, Nian Bing's nostrils were filled with the unique fragrance of a woman's body, while his face was gently touched with an ice-cold object. By the time he regained his senses, the sensations had disappeared. Feng Nu was standing at an arm's length from him, her face glowing red. "Hopefully you're not deceiving me. I'll await your Feast of Ice and Fire. If you manage to win, I'll consider your prior proposal." she said in a low voice, before returning to her seat in the blink of an eye.

Both Zi Qing Meng and Zi Qing Jian's expressions changed upon seeing this. While Zi Qing Jian lowered his head sadly and snuck glances at Feng Nu while sighing inwardly, jealousy flickered in Zi Qing Meng's eyes as she gripped the handles of her seat tightly. Her gaze towards Feng Nu grew cold.

Touching his face, Nian Bing discovered that the gentle sensation lingered. Nian Bing glanced deeply at Feng Nu and nodded resolutely at her before taking his place behind the kitchen counter. He could clearly feel the blood in his body practically boiling, as his hands trembled with excitement. The joints in his fingers and wrists appeared to have become more nimble. At this point, he knew that he was in peak condition.

Placing both hands on the kitchen counter, he gazed at Zi Xiu who was looking at him from the other side. Sparks flew between them as their gazes met. "Not bad, kid!" Zi Xiu smiled.

“I’m nowhere near Senior’s level. Let’s begin.” Nian Bing returned Zi Xiu’s smile while blushing lightly. His aura suddenly changed upon taking a step back, with faint flashes of red and blue appearing on the skin of his left and right sides respectively. The kitchen implements and ingredients in front of him were treated not just as ordinary objects, but as enemies.

When Nian Bing’s aura changed suddenly, Camel Chef Zi Xiu watched him, unmoving. Since Nian Bing had challenged him to a match during their first meeting, he knew that Nian Bing had extraordinary skills from his level of confidence. Zi Xiu didn’t take much notice at that time, since culinary skill level was linked to the time spent immersed in the culinary arts. In his eyes, Nian Bing was yet immature. However, upon discovering that Nian Bing had both ice and fire magic, he could no longer treat Nian Bing lightly. He clearly remembered how Demon Chef Zha Ji’s had lost, as well as the huge effect that magic had on food. Hence, the ingredients he had prepared were for making his best dish. Without feeling any urgency, he decided to observe Nian Bing, who Feng Nu had called the Magic Chef of Ice and Fire, and see for himself the true extent of his skill.

“The Free Wind’s Gentle Hymn – Proud Sky Knife.” With a subtle wave of Nian Bing’s right hand, the oddly-shaped Proud Sky Knife appeared in a green blaze of light and embedded itself in the countertop with a thud. Scattered rays of light from the Humming Wind Stone bathed the entire kitchen in a green haze. The knife moaned slightly as it quivered, and the air in the kitchen started circulating into a vortex of wind element.

As the entire Zi family cultivated wind elemental qi, looks of dismay were reflected on their paled faces upon seeing such an

exceptional wind elemental divine blade. “Truly an exceptional God Grade wind elemental knife,” sighed Zi Meng in awe. “This is a splendid God Grade magic staff!” Hei Ye exclaimed in admiration. “Unfortunately I’m not a wind elemental mage, or I would definitely take it for a spin.” Nian Bing had never needed to seal the Proud Sky Knife with a magic array.

“The Snow Goddess’s Sigh – Morning Dew Knife.” Pausing slightly, a ray of blue light appeared with a shake of Nian Bing’s hand and embedded itself with a thud beside the Proud Sky Knife. The blue light radiating from the knife was much weaker than the green glow of the Proud Sky Knife. Without a pause in his movements, Nian Bing proceeded to sketch a blue magic hexagram at lightning speed, using ice element from his right index finger. In the middle of the hexagram, he carved a small but intricate magic array using the pinprick technique. With a sudden flicker of blue light, the magic array was directly engraved into the Ice and Snow Goddess’s Stone. The seal on the magic stone was relaxed, and blue rays of light burst forth, forcing the green aside. While reflecting their individual brilliance, both green and blue light rays contested in the air equally.

Aside for Feng Nu, everyone else including masters such as Zi Meng and Hei Ye were staring bug-eyed at the scene before them, seemingly unable to believe that another God Grade precious blade had appeared before their eyes.

However, Nian Bing was not yet finished. “The Flame God’s Roar – True Sun Knife.” The wide blade of the True Sun Knife was the last to appear, its presence restoring the surrounding temperature that was lowered by the Morning Dew Knife. Red ripples of light circulated along the surface of the True Sun Knife, giving the

appearance that the Flame God's stone was alive and emanating a scorching aura. While faintly emitting divine light, the tri-colored light filled the entire kitchen with a dense mysterious energy, allowing Nian Bing to completely suppress Camel Chef Zi Xiu in terms of momentum. Good tools were essential to the successful execution of a job, and Nian Bing's confidence was raised to peak level with the appearance of his precious blades.

“Nian Bing, you have many treasures. I would definitely convince you to switch to martial arts if it wasn't for your age.” Zi Meng smiled.

“President, I assure you they will not be neglected. These blades are undoubtedly exceptional divine blades; however, they all serve as my magic staves. Most importantly, they are kitchen knives that are able to bring out the full extent of my culinary skills. I will start cooking now,” Nian Bing said with a slight smile. Upon hearing Nian Bing describe them as kitchen knives, Zi Meng almost spat blood, rendered speechless by Nian Bing who used such precious blades as kitchen knives.

Grabbing a chicken from the pile of ingredients, Nian Bing proceeded to speedily gut and clean the chicken on the countertop. Once finished, a large-size metal pot was filled with water and brought to boil. Picking up The Free Wind's Gentle Hymn, Nian Bing used the sharpness of the Proud Sky Knife in concert with its high-speed ability to cut up the entire chicken into one-inch cubes in a flurry of flickering green slashes. The chicken cubes were set aside to be rinsed in clean water before adding them to the pot. At this point, the showdown had begun.

Similar to Nian Bing, Zi Xiu started with boiling a pot of water. However, he immediately added the ingredients onions, garlic, Sichuan pepper, star anise, as well as an entire cleaned duck to the pot. Subsequently, he filled a basin with water and with a flicker of light in his eyes, took out two palm-sized meaty objects and soaked them in the clean water. Next, he filled a noodle basin with noodles and began its shaping process after adding two eggs and some water. His kneading was very slow but extremely powerful, causing the entire noodle mixture to adhere to his hands without spilling.

On the other side, Nian Bing had also started to show off his unique culinary arts. The chicken pieces that were being repeatedly rinsed were moved into yet another basin of water. However, this time, they weren't just simply rinsed. Nian Bing's hands began to dance in the water as they sped up, graceful as a fluttering butterfly. The movement of his hands defied common sense; it as if the joints of his wrists were nonexistent. The movement of his hands had formed a mirage on the water surface due to their extreme speed, yet orderly ripples formed on the water surface without splashing.

“A very good use of Separating Tendons and Bones as the Hand Wishes. It seems you've learned Old Zha's stuff. It's no wonder you have such confidence if you have this level of skill.” Zi Xiu who was kneading noodles praised Nian Bing's technique.

“Stop teasing me Senior, this is merely an insignificant skill of mine,” said Nian Bing smilingly while looking up at Zi Xiu. As he was saying this, he changed the water in the basin and continued washing the chicken pieces.

“Little Meng, what do you think Nian Bing is doing? Aren’t the chicken pieces going to break apart if he continues to wash them? Furthermore, the chicken is already clean when it was brought here,” asked Zi Qing Jian, who was looking on with a puzzled expression.

Zi Qing Meng was completely filled with excitement. For Zi Qing Jian, the primary motivation for learning the Heavy Eagle Hand was to improve his martial arts, whereas for Zi Qing Meng, learning the culinary arts was her hobby. The last few years of culinary training had greatly increased her love for this profession; hence she was completely immersed in this showdown between two masters at the pinnacle of the culinary world.

In her mind, she had elevated Nian Bing to the same level as her uncle, Zi Xiu. Upon hearing her brother’s query, she subconsciously replied, “Watch closely. Separating Tendons and Bones as the Hand Wishes is one of the Seven Great Forbidden Techniques of the culinary world. It is ranked third, one rank lower than Uncle’s Life Tearing Heavy Eagle Hand. However, based on Nian Bing’s technique, he has already trained his Separating Tendons and Bones as the Hand Wishes to the level where he can use it freely without restraint. By using Separating Tendons and Bones as the Hand Wishes to wash the chicken pieces, his aim is to remove every single trace of blood from the chicken pieces in order to prevent it from affecting the taste. The essence of Separating Tendons and Bones as the Hand Wishes lies in the principle of ‘squeeze’, and it is the best technique for either preparing noodles or washing ingredients. Uncle’s Heavy Eagle Hand is used for different purposes, and it’s hard to say for sure if either technique is superior. Ah, he also used Separating Tendons and Bones as the Hand Wishes in order to shatter the chicken bones. It seems he wants to use them to season the soup.”

Finally, the washing of the chicken pieces had been completed. At the same time, the water in the pot had reached the boiling point. The chicken pieces which had formed into a funny ball shape in Nian Bing's hands were directly placed into the boiling water. Using The Free Wind's Gentle Hymn, Nian Bing separated the ball of meat into small pieces via a flurry of cuts. With increasing speed, Nian Bing added the prepared shark's fin into the boiling water, followed by an abalone and shredded shiitake mushrooms. Lastly, diced ginger and scallion were added before he closed the pot.

Chapter 53.1 - Magic Chef Of Ice And Fire VS Camel Chef God

Taking a step back, Nian Bing gripped the True Sun Knife on the counter top. With the blade facing down and the Flame God's Stone raised, he chanted softly, "Mighty Fire God! Please allow me to make use of your left hand and let your flame descend onto earth to eradicate the wicked power. Let the blaze illuminate the whole earth and destroy all the barriers obstructing me. – The Fire God's Left Hand."

Specks of red light coalesced around the Flame God's Stone, its light shining brighter and brighter. Nian Bing pointed the knife handle forward, and a gigantic Flame God's Left Hand appeared. The entire pot was lifted up by the fiery hand, completely enshrouded in flame. He suddenly shouted, and the left hand drew a red hexagram in mid-air. He slapped his hand forward, and the hexagram suddenly poured into the Flame God's Left Hand. In the next instant, the Flame God's Left Hand's scarlet red glow had been transformed into purple flames, forcibly bringing the rank 5 fire spell to rank 6.

Hei Ye said in surprised, "A strengthening magic array! I didn't think this boy knew this trick." In these three months that he and Nian Bing probed into the mysteries of dual element magic. This was the first time he had shown his talent for magic arrays. Magic arrays could increase the power of any spell, but they were quite difficult to draw. For someone to draw an array in mid-air and immediately incorporate it into the spell like Nian Bing required a deep understanding of magic arrays as well as familiarity with the fire element. That is to say, only mages who delved in the field of magic arrays could do this.

The pot was flushed red from the heat of the rank 6 purple flames, but its lid did not burst out because of the boiling water inside. This was because the lid had been fused to the body of the pot by the extremely hot flames. However, the pot's interior continued to get hotter, ready to blow at any time. Nian Bing's mood remained calm, manipulating the purple-flamed Fire God's Left Hand to again act as a smelting furnace for the pot. With a wave of his hand, ice balls transformed into ice needles. They hovered above the pot, and in the next moment, three holes appeared in the pot lid. When the ice needles entered the pot they naturally turned into water. The steam released from the three holes eliminated the danger of the pot exploding. Nian Bing did not pay any more attention to the pot and instead turned to the winter melon on the table.

At the moment, Zi Xiu had already finished kneading the dough. In his large hands, the dough had formed a round lump. He had scrutinized all of Nian Bing's actions and couldn't help but sigh. Infusing magic into cooking was such an advantage. He opened up his own pot and mixed around the ingredients a bit.

He extracted the two items he had placed into the pot and put them on the table. With a shout, he slapped one of them onto the hard surface. Slap! red liquid splattered everywhere. Zi Xiu's hands pressed down in succession, immediately sticking the red item onto the counter. His right hand formed a claw and descended upon the other red object. The red item melded onto the table. Then his two hands transformed into a series of clawed afterimages. Every time they struck, his fingers would accurately bore into the flattened red object. His ten fingers were mighty hammers, chiseling away at the red items into a fleshy pulp. This was exactly the 'heavy' part of the 'Heavy Eagle Hand.'

In just ten breaths of time, the two red items had completely taken on a pasty consistency. However, the countertop had not been harmed by the Heavy Eagle Hand. His control over his strength had reached the apex. He threw the red meat into the pot, and immediately, the duck soup released a strong fragrance.

The aroma wafted to Nian Bing, and his head snapped up to look at Zi Xiu with surprise. “What good technique! Goose liver and duck do complement one another and bring out each other’s flavor. Senior’s Zi Xiu’s skills are absolutely exquisite.” Producing such a complementary effect between two different foods, like when Nian Bing used the hen and shiitake mushrooms, naturally brought about the best outcome. Along with the tasty abalone and shark’s fin, cooked in extremely hot temperatures, the flavors were completely melded together.

This kind of soup was the best combination of flavors that Nian Bing could make at the present. However, Camel Chef Zi Xiu matched flavors in a way he had never seen before. Still, he could tell from the scent that it must contain ingredients that mutual set off one another. In order to find perfectly complementary ingredients, it would take a lot of time and experience. Nian Bing had studied cooking for eight years and had only discovered the simplest of matches. For Zi Xiu to dare to do such a thing, it was an obvious show of Zi Xiu’s level of immersion in culinary arts.

Zi Xiu met Nian Bing’s gaze. The two were obviously appreciative of each other’s talents. Although their competition had just started, they knew that the other held a great understanding of culinary arts from their actions. Currently, the principal element of Nian Bing’s cooking was surprise and mystery. However, Zi

Xiu's cooking was on the very regular, undeviating side. He brought traditional cooking to its limits. His every movement seemed simple, but even with ten years of constant study and practice, it would be impossible to reach such a realm of perfection and smoothness. Zi Xiu's movements could not be described as practiced. Every movement looked slow, but a normal chef wouldn't be able to replicate them even with three times the time

What was Nian Bing doing now? He held the winter melon pointed upwards, the top of which had been hewn into a zigzag shape by Proud Sky. He had already scooped out the pulp and was left with 6.5 cm of gourd.

Those who had studied cooking for a few years would know that Nian Bing was making a winter melon goblet. A winter melon was formed into a container for holding soup or porridge. However, was this what Nian Bing was doing? Of course not. Just this level of carving from a chef like him would be a detriment to his status. In order to produce the best effects, he had just made preparation while he was preparing and the competition was already underway. He also had a plan, but wasn't certain of its success. Breathing deeply, Nian Bing looked at Feng Nu off to the side. She wore an encouraging expression, making Nian Bing's chest surge with hot blood. At this moment, his confidence had reached a peak.

With a wave of his right hand, he put Proud Sky onto the counter top and swapped it out for Morning Dew. Carefully, he placed the winter melon goblet onto the center of a large plate that was 70 cm in diameter. After adjusting its position, he confirmed that that the winter melon was placed dead center. Breathing in deeply, Nian Bing moved. The knife seemed to be covered in a layer of icy mist.

Nian Bing swung the knife lightly, and immediately, a hair-like strand of winter melon separated from the main body. The strand lay on the plate, like a sliver of wood. He again showed off his practiced knife technique, again shaving off just a strand of the peel. The blue haze continued to sparkle atop the plate. Every strand of green fell onto the plate evenly, magically. Between each strand of winter melon was only a sliver of space, separating each one in an extremely regular fashion.

At the moment, Zi Qing Meng had gotten to her feet in excitement. “Pulling Silk From the Cocoon. It isn’t one of the Five Distinguished knife techniques, but it could be ranked as sixth. This is definitely Pulling Silk from a Cocoon!” She was very clear on the fact that Nian Bing’s culinary skills weren’t any lower than her uncle’s based on Nian Bing’s display of his knife skills. He displayed no tricks since it wasn’t related to magic; this was the result of hard work and effort.

He rotated the plate gently. Nian Bing’s face was like a ripple-less old well, impervious to emotion. His knives twinkled with the frosty mist surrounding Morning Dew and the winter melon. The reason why he cut the winter melon into slender strands was to retain the roundness of the winter melon goblet. The thinner the skin of the winter melon goblet, the closer he was to his goal.

Zi Xiu saw Nian Bing’s Pulling Silk from Cocoon, and his eyes flashed in surprise. However, his hand movements did not stop. He placed a 30 cm strip of meat onto the table and took out the kneaded dough again. He kneaded the dough again, forming it into the same shape as the loin. He set the two different ingredients upright on the counter in front of him. Next, he started to hit them, his every movement equally intense. Every strike was fierce

and banging sounds rang out like the beating of a drum. His left hand hit the dough, and his right the meat, continuously repeating the same movements.

Nian Bing's winter melon skinning finally ended as Zi Xiu continued to strike his ingredients. The winter melon had shed its dark green skin, revealing the winter melon flesh, sparkling like jade. The shaved off skin formed a perfect disk, making the winter melon goblet appear like jade on top of a lotus leaf. Of course, the winter melon goblet did not sparkle naturally; this was the work of the Morning Dew Knife. This was precisely why Nian Bing chose Morning Dew in place of the much swifter Proud Sky Knife. While he was shaving slivers off the squash, he uniformly channeled ice element into the goblet. Right now, the winter melon goblet had transformed into a frozen state.

The task Nian Bing decided to undertake was difficult for him, but he had to prepare for his next move. The winter melon flesh was softer now. If this were an ordinary carving, he probably would have been done by now, but in order to prevail over the Camel Chef Zi Xiu, he had no choice but to try to enter a domain he never had before. Thus, he could not be impatient at all. A blue light flashed, and Morning Dew returned to the countertop. Nian Bing did not continue with his movements, but rather stared at the winter melon gourd without moving. The grain of the winter melon was very fine. Right now, the only thing in his mind was this jade-like ingredient.

With a flash of light, Nian Bing pulled out the cloth bag containing Demonic Engraving. Demonic Engraving God Knives did not refer to a single knife, but a suite of knives. When Zha Ji had passed down the set of Demonic Engravings to him, he had

said that the Nine Demonic Engraving Knives were forged from dee-see silver and were tempered with all sorts of medicinal herbs. Not only was it extremely rigid, it also had its own spirit. It's spirit could only be shown in its entirety by using the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragon—the extreme limits of knife arts. Only once spirit and knife had fused into one could its spirit be brought out. Demonic Engraving Knife and the person using Demonic Engraving were equally important.

The biggest of the Demonic Engraving jumped into Nian Bing's hand. He did not hurry to use it, but rather scooped a small bowl of rice into a clean basin and soaked it in clean water.

Zi Xiu saw what Nian Bing was doing and cried out in his heart with doubt, Demonic Engraving! Could it be that this lad truly trained in the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons?

Nian Bing lifted up the 70 cm platter. Similar to when he had made the Nine Mysterious Dragons Concealed in Clouds of Ice, a block of ice condensed under the platter. He set the platter on top of it lightly and spun it equally as light. Immediately, it began to pick up in speed. Nian Bing adjusted the angle of the platter till it was dead center on its stand. Right now, the rice grains soaking in the water were making soft crackling sounds. This was the sound of water entering the grains. This was a trick to cooking rice. First, soak the rice in water for a bit and then cook it, so the rice would be easier to cook and heated evenly, making the flavor much better. As Nian Bing was doing this, his gaze never left the winter melon goblet. He held his right hand in front of him, the 15 cm Demonic Engraving flickering with a gold light.

“The work of the gods are hidden within the blue flame. Engrave a dragon, carve a phoenix with a wave of the knife.” Each word flew from his mouth, sonorous and powerful. On the last word, Demonic Engraving started to move. It stuck upwards from his palm. Nian Bing flipped his palm and fingers and Demonic Engraving headed for the winter melon goblet. Called the first divine knife of the culinary world, the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons returned to the human realm.

Ghostly blue light danced on his fingertips, making nine cuts with each flicker of his hand. The winter melon gourd did not fall down in fragments, but rather like a shimmering green frost. Demonic Engraving continued flashing as the ghostly blue light flickered in and out like it was exploding. At this moment, Nian Bing’s spirit had fused completely with the knife. He forgot about the competition, about everything. His eyes, heart, and hands held only the knife, only that blue haze. His fingers and wrists were strangely soft as they were wrapped in that blue light. It was impossible to distinguish where knife ended and hand began. Only a green mist continued to float away, gently landing on top of the winter melon peel shavings.

Zi Xiu was still pounding away at the dough and meat on the counter, but his gaze never left Nian Bing’s hands. To see the top technique in the culinary world after twenty years, how could he not be excited? Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons, it truly was Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons. From Nian Bing’s mental state to the intermittent flashes of the knife, he seemed to recall the one who had suppressed him in his generation—the Demon Chef. The Demon Chef’s elegant bearing had once again appeared. The corner of his eyes were moist. Zha Ji, oh Zha Ji. It seems that not only could I not compare to you in culinary arts. I also am far from you in teaching disciples.

Chapter 53.2 - Magic Chef Of Ice And Fire VS Camel Chef God

Nian Bing continued to spin the plate with his left hand, making the winter melon goblet spin faster and faster. He filled his mind with the image of that green, great dragon, infusing its every pose of the into his knife tip. Khaldrhys' booming roar, its deadly strike, the sound of its wings flapping, were all engraved in his mind. Zha Ji had never seen a living dragon, but Nian Bing had, after all, he witnessed a true great dragon, Khaldrhys. Zha Ji's knife technique in his peak was already very exquisite, but he had only visualised a dragon, not its essence. Nian Bing's knife technique might not be on par, but in terms of the essence of the knife technique, the student had already surpassed the teacher. As his Demonic Engraving lived and breathed, so did the dragon.

Carving definitely didn't require a long time to produce the best results, especially with Demonic Engraving Knife. Nian Bing's voice was filled with a cold arrogance as the mnemonic chant finally made its appearance.

“Demonic-hand-falls-and-the-startled-Heavens-transform.” At this moment, he was the Demonic Engraving Knife. A ghostly blue light imprinted the shape of the dragon onto the winter melon.

“The-finished-carving-billowed-one-hundred-times.” The knife flipped, and the pale blue haze seemed to assail the jade-like winter melon without end.

“Divine-work-lasts-for-eternity-.” The knife technique changed again. His meticulous motions turned wide and exaggerated. Every

stroke of the knife scored a deep gorge.

“Raised-knife-reflects-the-cold-spring-of-the-moon.” The pale blue light suddenly blasted brilliantly, and the winter melon goblet seemed to glow like the moon as the light flowed down onto the gourd like spring water, filling every nook and cranny. The divine, miraculous knife technique had just been raised to a higher level. The faint dragon aura revolved around the winter melon goblet as it continued to turn. The blue tinge disappeared and a white fog remained around the gourd without dissipating, making the entire winter melon goblet extremely mysterious.

Demonic Engraving vanished, and Nian Bing’s right hand was slightly trembling. Even he didn’t know how many cuts he made. His hand had been driven to its limit, and he wouldn’t be able to use it for the next three days. However, he was incomparably elated. He knew he had succeeded, finally succeeded in touching the essence of the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons. He had found the feeling of blending his spirit and cooking skills. Not only was his Dance of Gathering Rain Dragons successful, he also had entered another realm of culinary comprehension.

Breathing shallowly, Nian Bing gazed at the winter melon goblet. The spinning plate gradually came to a stop and the icy fog dissipated. Besides Nian Bing and Zi Xiu, everyone was wearing despondent expressions. They only saw irregular, crisscrossing strokes made by the knife on the jade-like winter melon. Moreover, the surroundings were filled with white squash powder. The other strange thing was that there seemed to be three protrusions where the winter melon was. No one knew what shape it was supposed to look like, but the protrusions were very odd. Compared to the gorgeous knife flashes, the final outcome didn’t

make anyone satisfied. Even Zi Qing Meng returned to her seat in defeat.

Nian Bing's face was expressionless as he looked at the winter melon goblet. He picked up the bowl of rice on the side and drained them. He suddenly flung out his wrist, and the moist grains flew into the air. The Morning Dew Knife moved, and instantly, the air was full of with knife silhouettes. The rice in the air was hidden between the flash of the knives. Then he caught every single grain as they fell with crisp plinking sounds.

He poured out the grains on a chopping board. Nian Bing took out a strip of cloth and wrapped his right hand, tying it around his wrist. This time, he took out Demonic Engraving with his left hand. This was the third largest knife. It was slightly smaller than before, about as wide as half a willow leaf at the tip. Sadly, he wasn't able to use his right hand now, but he still wasn't finished. His left hand moved. This time, his aim was the rice. Of course, even if he was stronger, he couldn't carve anything fancy into the rice right now. What he was going to do was both easy and hard. The knife flashed, and a grain of rice was tossed back into the bowl. At the moment, the rice grains were no longer their original oval shape. They were round. He had the skill to carve something perfectly round. If it weren't for there being people with astonishing eyesight in the area, they would definitely think that he was doing some useless action.

The rice was very brittle. Even if they were frozen they were still brittle. However, after being encased in ice, they were also hard. Nian Bing wanted this hardness. He had shown off the Dance of Gathering Rain Dragons with his right hand. This time, his left hand would show off the Brocade Character Void Lattice. Carving

the grains of rice into circles wasn't easy at all. The tip of his knife flicked at the grains nonstop, one stroke per grain of rice. The knife flashes grew quicker, and the pile of grains on the chopping board grew smaller. When the last grain of rice was put into the bowl, there was only a pile of small fragments on the table. Nian Bing didn't throw them away, but instead carefully put them on a plate. After finishing that, his face finally showed a slight smile. After glancing at his wrapped hand, he raised his head to watch Zi Xiu.

Right now, Zi Xiu was still pressing on his meat and dough. When Nian Bing looked at him, he had just opened the pot next to him. A thick fragrance immediately suffused through the kitchen. Zi Xiu inhaled deeply, then nodded his head in satisfaction. He flicked his left hand, taking out a large, slotted spoon. He dipped it into the pot, scooping out all of the ingredients inside. Although it looked extremely easy, Nian Bing's heart was thumping loudly. First off, the slotted spoon was timed so that the instant it entered the pot, the soup had reached its maximum boil. Additionally, the slotted spoon looked like it only dipped in once, but in reality, the slotted spoon flashed seven times, striking at seven different angles. It was just scooping all the ingredients out of the pot, but that slotted spoon completely showcased the mystical skills of the Camel Chef. Nian Bing knew that he couldn't do it.

Zi Xiu met Nian Bing's gaze and spoke with a strange smile. "Boy, are you tired yet? I'll be done right away over here. It seems that we have walked two different extremes. Me, to turn the complicated into simple and you to turn the simple into complicated. Let us examine it in detail." He grabbed the dough on top of the chopping board and put the meat onto the dough. Every was surprised to discover that the kneaded dough and meat had exactly the same shape. The meat fell into the dough and hid it

completely, the dough nowhere to be seen. The meat also didn't stick out at any point. Zi Xiu pressed on the meat and stuck his index finger into the meat below. He flicked his index finger upwards, sending the meat and dough spinning into the air. Zi Xiu looked at Nian Bing and said in a deep voice, "Life Tearing Heavy-Eagle-Hand."

At this moment, his obscene and indecent appearance suddenly surged forth with a bold aura. His two hands stretched out, lightning fast, leaving behind countless afterimages. Green light gathered at the tips of his fingers and with a resounding thwack, the dough was split into two. The strange thing was that the toughness of the dough wasn't the same as regular dough. After being rendered into two, there was no deformation. He stacked the two pieces of the dough complex and split in half again and again, nonstop. The dough and meat complex continued to divide and rejoin, divide and rejoin.

When Nian Bing saw this, he couldn't help but look grave. He understood very clearly that the way Zi Xiu had kneaded the dough, pressed the dough, and pressed the meat had been very special so that the toughness of the dough and meat reached it extremes. If he wasn't wrong, the dough and meat right now had become as tough as cloth. If it were him, he might not be able to tear it apart.

When Zi Xiu had repeated the process nine times, the dough-meat complex had turned into 512 red-white-alternating stripes. He stopped tearing them apart. With a turn of his wrist, the dough strands started to rotate quickly. Like a fried dough twist, the meeting of red and white was extremely striking. Nian Bing inwardly admired him. Just distinguishing the marbled pattern of

the meat strands was extremely difficult, and Zi Xiu was able to use Life Tearing Heavy Eagle Hand to its limits. Since the beginning, where he was kneading the meat and dough, he had been using a special technique. On top of his special 'Tearing' characteristics, his slow kneading process wasn't inferior to his own Separating Bones and Tendons as the Hand Wishes.

The dough strands were rolled into a lump, and the green light around Zi Xiu's suddenly intensified as his hands moved in concert. He started on the ends and moved in, imprinting the dough strands with his finger prints. Once the dough strands were covered in dough, he tore them apart again. This time, the stretch marks changed. A strange scene lay before of them. Every single dough strand became part red and white as the shreds of meat and shreds of dough seemed to stick together. After he had ripped them apart nine times, he held the strands of dough in front of the pot. He reached to his waist to pull out a short, green knife just like Zi Qing Meng's.

Nian Bing, of course, knew what Zi Xiu was doing. He couldn't help but stare with wide eyes. Zi Xiu moved very slowly, the knife gliding forward. When he was just one inch away from the strands of noodles, he stopped. "Dense-Jade-Screen," he articulated clearly. When the first word left his mouth, his wristed started to tremble. When he said the last word, the knife suddenly returned to its still form. But in this moment, everyone clearly felt like the knife was alive. A ear piercing screech rang out from the knife, the original knife suddenly transforming into thousands as the green light burst everywhere in an explosion, swallowing all the noodle strands. The Dense Jade Screen's secret lay in the word 'dense,' going from still to movement, exploding in an instant.

He put the noodles into the pot and closed the lid. He stuck the short knife onto the chopping board and then turned to look at Nian Bing. “The secret of the Dense Jade Screen’s lies in the word ‘Dense,’ which relies on the knife technique being very quick. Even if your Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons isn’t faster than my technique, the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons finds its importance in the word ‘Dance,’ implying it captures the spirit. The Dense Jade Screen is definitely inferior to the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons in terms of spirit. But in the end, we are comparing flavor.” After saying that, he opened the pot again and used chopsticks to stir and prod the contents a few times. After adding many seasonings, he said, “I need a moment to cook. Right now, let’s see yours.”

Nian Bing nodded at Zi Xiu. Although his right hand could not be as nimble as before, at least it was no longer shaking. He reached out for the tofu he had prepared before. This time, his knife was very slow as he carefully cut the tofu into one-inch square chunks. He slid his right hand, which couldn’t wield a knife, over the soft tofu, turning it firm. After everything had been prepared, they was only one final step needed.

Nian Bing went up to the iron pot, still burning on the fire. With a wave of Proud Sky Knife, a single slice separated the pot from its lid. He set the lid down on the side, and a rich aroma and steam wafted out. The chicken and shiitake, abalone and shark fin’s fragrance had already been blended perfectly while they were being stewed. Nian Bing grinned, then used a slotted spoon to scoop out the contents of the pot. Only, the Camel Chef Zi Xiu had only used one scoop. He had to use three in order to clear the pot of all its dregs. He placed the frozen, plump rice into the pot and mumbled a few lines then he placed his incapacitated right hand against the scorching pot. When his hand came in contact the pot,

his entire hand turned purple. This was the purple flame spell.

In this instant, the soup in the pot began to boil intensely. Every grain of rice roiled and boiled within the pot. Nian Bing took out a pair of chopsticks and looked at Zi Xiu with a smile. He stuck his chopsticks into the pot, and with gentle, rhythmic stirs, the surface of the water began to form a vortex, the rolling bubbles nowhere to be seen. His right hand continued to apply heat and his left hand kept stirring. The soup, which should have already surpassed its boiling point didn't boil over. The pearl-shaped rice grains were evenly distributed through every corner of the pot. Soon, the vortex increased its speed. At the moment, Nian Bing's left hand was encased in flame in order to prevent the scorching water vapor from spreading outward.

Zi Xiu shook from head to toe, saying in astonishment, "Breakwater Still Surface Mysterious Jade Hand, no it should be called Breakwater Still Surface Flame Hand. When did Zha Ji learn this?"

Nian Bing did not stop moving his hand and replied with a grin, "This is not something my teacher taught me. Actually, this is just an imitation of it. I still do not comprehend the true rhythm of the Breakwater Still Surface Mysterious Jade Hand. However, the results from this technique is a lot better than just cooking it plain. It distributes the heat much more evenly."

Ordinarily, cooking congee required at least an hour for the grains to completely become congee. However, by heating with the purple flame, Nian Bing only needed a fourth of the time to reach his desired goal. He removed his chopsticks from the water and put

the tofu into the pot, as well as the green bamboo shoots from the ingredients he had prepared earlier. Proud Sky danced once more, turning the shoots into small, dark green cubes. Nian Bing pressed both hands to the pot, both using purple flame to heat up the pot faster.

Chapter 54.1 - Ice And Fire Nine Layer Heavens – Ultimate Cauldron Of Nine Dragons

“Senior Zi Xiu, let us serve our dishes at the same time.” As he spoke, he lifted his purple flame-coated hands and swept them towards the prepared winter melon goblet releasing a wave of blazing heat, dissipating the white fog and falling softly like snow. A neat circle of winter melon powder surrounded the goblet that was recovering its green splendour. Under the influence of the scorching heat from the purple flame, the goblet brimmed with emerald essence, that made it appear like genuine jade. The onlookers were stunned as they realized that they had misjudged the dish earlier.

With the appearance of the Demonic Engraving Knife, there would naturally be no mistakes in the preparation. Reflected on the surface of the winter melon goblet was no simple engraving, but a full-fledged sculpture. The walls of the goblet had been thinned out by around half an inch, and nine azure dragons appeared to be coiling and leaping on its surface. The dragons appeared to be lifelike to the point where each individual scale could be clearly distinguished.

To Camel Chef Zi Xiu’s surprise, each dragon appeared to be alive and writhing in different arrangements. Whether be it swooping down onto prey, clutching objects with its claws, soaring with outstretched wings, roaring majestically, or leaping through the clouds, the nine dragons intertwined perfectly without blemish. The three protrusions seen previously were actually dragon heads, with their dragon feelers formed from winter melon scraps

produced by the carving, and subsequently fused in a baptism of ice and fire. The entire kitchen was momentarily rendered speechless at the sight, with even Nian Bing himself enraptured with a flicker in his eyes.

Nian Bing added a dash of salt to the pot before pouring the white-green congee mixture into the winter melon goblet. His actions were deliberate and careful, for fear of damaging any part of the goblet. With the pearlescent white rice on the cusp of melting, coupled with the emerald-green bamboo shoots, and topped off with jade-white tofu, Nian Bing had completed his congee dish.

Together with Nian Bing, Zi Xiu also started serving his dish. The reddish-gold soup exuded a thick fragrance as it was poured into a large bowl. Noodle strands that were even finer than hair emerged from within the soup, forming a blend of red, gold and white. Although the setting was not as lavish as Nian Bing's, the dish looked undoubtedly delicious.

As both competitors brought their works of art to the onlookers, Feng Nu asked Nian Bing blankly, "Is this thing even edible?"

Stunned for a moment, Nian Bing broke into laughter, saying, "Are you questioning my skill? Don't worry, there's no poison in it."

Feng Nu shook her head. "No, I simply can't bring myself to eat it. What is the name of this dish?"

“Don’t worry. If you like it, I can make it again for you. It’s called Ice and Fire Nine Layered Heavens – Ultimate Cauldron of Nine Dragons.” Nian Bing smiled.

“Hmph, Ultimate Pot of Nine Dragons. This is basically just that old fart Zha Ji’s famed Pearl-White Jade Congee.” Zi Xiu said irritably.

“That’s true, only with some minor changes. Senior’s bowl of noodles should be the Rouge Golden Jade Noodles that was highly regarded by master.” Nian Bing spoke without a hint of anger.

“Everyone, come taste the dishes. I fear I’ve lost my touch after not having cooked for quite some time,” replied Zi Xiu with a snort.

Zi Xiu’s expression immediately darkened when everyone started in on the dishes, as their focus was fully on Nian Bing’s Ultimate Pot of Nine Dragons, with his Rouge Golden Jade Noodles left ignored. Seeing his uncle’s noodles left untouched, the kind and honest Zi Qing Jian put down his spoon that was already reaching towards the Ultimate Pot of Nine Dragons, and instead turned his attention towards the noodles.

Nian Bing walked to Zi Xiu’s side and said with a slight grin, “Senior, if you don’t mind, let us assess each other’s dishes. Although noodles may be a simple dish, but dishes made by Senior will definitely be unique.” Employing flattery, he managed to ease the look on Zi Xiu’s face. With a nod, both of them started eating each other’s dishes.

Everyone was so engrossed in eating that not a single word was spoken, not even exclamations of delight. In no time at all, Nian Bing's Ultimate Pot of Nine Dragons was left with only the goblet, without even a chance for himself to have a single mouthful. To everyone's astonishment, the biggest eater was actually the president of the Orchid Dream College, Zi Meng. Fully utilizing his strength as a Martial Saint, he stuffed his mouth with delicious morsels at lightning speed using his spoon.

"Zi Meng, are you taking advantage of your speed to bully others? This is made for me by my pupil." Although no one else dared to speak up, Hei Ye was not so polite. In the rush for the Pearl-White Jade Congee, he was the only one without martial arts. As magic didn't serve any purpose in this situation, he only managed to eat a small amount.

After finishing a small bowl of Zi Xiu's Rouge Golden Jade Noodles, Nian Bing turned towards him, "Senior's noodles are perfect in terms of color, fragrance, taste, thought, and shape. I especially admire Senior's usage of the Life-Tearing Heavy Eagle Hand. It would have been impossible for me to make such a delicious noodle dish."

"Although the Breakwater Still Surface technique wasn't used, the fine noodle strands don't stick together. In addition, the noodles themselves are tough; hence the thick fragrance of the duck soup and goose liver fully incorporated into each and every strand of noodle. This is truly an exquisite dish!"

"Nian Bing, who do you think is the winner of this match?" Zi

Xiu said with a calm smile.

After a moment's hesitation, Nian Bing replied, "To be exact, Senior, I've won. Both our dishes have their own specialties; however, your combination of duck soup and goose liver is very innovative. At the same time, the fragrance generated is equal to my dish, yet the raw materials used are much cheaper. Therefore, the victory goes to you with regards to fragrance. Having been processed with the Life-Tearing Heavy Eagle Hand, the taste of the noodles is also slightly superior to my Pearl-White Jade Congee, although the difference is extremely slight. Am I correct to say that you've won in terms of taste and fragrance?"

"Kid, you truly have outstanding talent in the culinary arts. No doubt, you've touched on the key points of the dish, but you're being overly humble. Having tasted your congee, I would have been confident of beating you in terms of taste... if it was the usual Pearl-White Jade Congee. However, your version is completely different. With your unique method of heating and deep-freeze processing, the taste has reached an entirely different level, and I'm able to distinguish eighty-one different variations in their taste. Truly, it lives up to the name of Ice and Fire Nine Layered Heavens. With the usage of magic in cooking, countless changes can be achieved to the taste of food. It's no wonder you were so confident earlier. There's no need to cover up the truth for me, a loss is a loss."

Upon seeing Zi Xiu who had calmly admitted defeat, Nian Bing's admiration of him increased even further. "My culinary arts are still yet immature and lacking in various areas. If it was not for my usage of magic, I wouldn't have been able to stand on equal footing with Senior. I got lucky this time." Nian Bing said respectfully.

With a shake of his head, Zi Xiu replied, “Not everything can be attributed to luck. Even though the utilization of magic in cooking will generate unique results, without long hours of practice and understanding, you would not have been able to combine magic and cooking to this extent. Of course, there are still some deficiencies in your technique. Your combination of magic and cooking still lacks refinement, and the way you process your ingredients is still rather crude. You will need to pay more attention to these aspects in the future.”

“Nian Bing, what really surprised me wasn’t your Ice and Fire Nine Layered Heavens, even though it was magical. After all, the usage of magic during cooking is already an advantage in itself. In fact, I knew I had lost when you managed to perform the complete Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons. Even though I carried an advantage when it comes to the fragrance and taste of the dish, but in terms of color, shape, and thought, there was no way I could have matched up to your Ultimate Pot of Nine Dragons. However, I certainly didn’t expect your Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons to have surpassed your master’s.”

“Senior, you’ve overestimated me. You might not believe it, but if you were to ask me to repeat my earlier performance, I would definitely be unable to produce the same result. During the carving process earlier, I had somehow reached an inexplicable state of mind. Even I myself have no idea how many cuts I had made, however at the moment the carving was completed, I could clearly feel that I had succeeded.” Nian Bing said with a bitter laugh.

“There’s no need to underestimate yourself, as feelings are an important part of cooking. You have now reached the stage where

cooking is all about your comprehension and understanding. Although your knife technique is not yet as refined as your master's, but when it comes to understanding the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons, your master is clearly no match for you. Seeing as how you already reached such results at a tender age, you will eventually become the top-ranked chef in the continent."

As he was speaking, Zi Xiu placed the last piece of tofu in this mouth with a satisfied look. Chewing on the tofu, he continued, "This tofu is pretty well-done. Usually, tofu doesn't absorb flavors easily. It appears that after your deep-freezing process, although there are no visible changes to the exterior, the inside of the tofu was full of holes which could fully absorb the delicious essence of the broth. In addition, after being subjected to extreme heat, not only did the tofu retain its shape, it actually became thicker and more solid. The final dash of salt which you added at the end was the crucial finishing touch that really brought the feeling of Ice and Fire Nine Layer Heavens to life. Salt is the epitome of all seasonings, and any savoury dish will be enhanced with the addition of salt. You must remember this point and make full use of it in the future."

Nian Bing acknowledged it with a sincere nod. "Thank you very much, Senior. So..."

Knowing what Nian Bing was about to ask, Zi Xiu used qi to compress his voice before speaking a few words to Nian Bing. Upon hearing his words, Nian Bing was momentarily dumbstruck.

"How...how is this even possible? The identity of that person..."

Zi Xiu made a shushing motion towards Nian Bing, saying, “Weren’t you the one who said in class that nothing is impossible? With the sensitive nature of that person’s identity, now you understand why your master didn’t request you to avenge him. He did not wish for any complications to befall his only treasured apprentice. Furthermore, I’m afraid your master hasn’t forgotten his feelings for that person, even unto death.”

Nian Bing was at a loss as to what to do. If his master had never let go of his feelings towards that woman, would it be suitable for him to avenge his master? Shaking his head, he decided to meet that woman at least once, regardless of his desire for vengeance. Perhaps he would be able to decide further based on her attitude.

“Senior, thank you for telling me all this. If you don’t mind, I’d like to have some more Rouge Golden Jade Noodles.” Nian Bing said after thinking it through.

“Unfortunately I think there’s none of your share left. Why don’t you take a look behind you?” Zi Xiu chuckled.

As Nian Bing looked behind him blankly, he discovered that the crowd which was gathered around his Ultimate Pot of Nine Dragons had set their sights on the Rouge Golden Jade Noodles in front of him. The yearning for food that was reflected in their eyes sent shivers over Nian Bing’s body. He quickly stepped back and made an inviting gesture.

This time around, Feng Nu was the fastest to take action. With a sweep of her chopsticks, a bowlful of noodles had been collected. Nian Bing realized suddenly that the word ‘ladylike’ held no

meaning in front of delicious food. Aside from Feng Nu, even Zi Qing Meng – who was normally quiet and cold – was also frantically rushing to eat her share of the delicious noodle dish.

Moving past the crowd, Zi Xiu approached Nian Bing's Ultimate Pot of Nine Dragons. Upon close examination of the winter melon goblet, he exclaimed in admiration at the lifelike and detailed sculpture. The nine azure dragons were free of imperfections and looked extremely alluring. Unfortunately, all the Pearl-White Jade Congee in the goblet was gone, without a single speck of residue remaining. There were even scratches on some parts of the interior of the goblet.

“If this was a real piece of jade, it would definitely be one of the top treasures in the world! The Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons is truly worthy to be called the top-ranked knife technique in the culinary world. My Dense Jade Screen cannot match up to it, no matter how refined my technique becomes. Nian Bing, you have really surpassed your master. Ice and Fire Nine Layer Heavens – Ultimate Pot of Nine Dragons is an excellent name for your dish!” Zi Xiu sighed in appreciation.

Shooting Zi Xiu a glance, Nian Bing replied, “Senior, the reason I was in a rush to hold this competition with you was because I'm afraid that I may have to leave this place soon. I have to hurry to complete a task that was entrusted to me by a friend.”

Disappointment flickered through Zi Xiu's eyes. “Are you going to leave, just like that? Even though I've appointed you as a knife arts teacher for the culinary faculty, you've yet to fulfill a single day of your duties.”

“Senior, I quite enjoy the environment here, especially when learning from you and teacher Hei Ye. When I’ve achieved my dream, I will come back in the future.”

Various emotions flickered through Zi Xiu’s eyes. “Go ahead. As an elite chef, you’ll need to undergo all kinds of different experiences. The culinary world of the future will be a stage where you can perform, and I will not stop you from moving forward. However, keep in mind to not have your mind clouded with pride, no matter what level your culinary skills may have reached. Otherwise, you will definitely encounter setbacks, similar to what happened to your master. Were it not for his momentary carelessness and underestimation of his opponent, he wouldn’t have lost by simply preparing a few dishes. Even though his opponent had the assistance of magic, their culinary skills would never have matched the level of the Demon Chef,” he said while clapping Nian Bing’s shoulder with a firm hand.

Chapter 54.2 - Ice And Fire Nine Layer Heavens – Ultimate Cauldron Of Nine Dragons

Nian Bing nodded and said, “Thank you, I will definitely remember your words.”

Zi Xiu asked, “When are you planning on leaving?”

Nian Bing thought for a moment, then answered, “I think today. Feng Nu came to the college to challenge and I ended up revealing my dual element magic. If I stay here any longer, it would be hard to avoid some unnecessary trouble.”

Camel Chef Zi Xiu nodded and replied, “That’s fine. You would have left sooner or later anyway. I’ll wait for your return. I hope that you can take over my class, so I can live freely for a few years.”

Nian Bing laughed. Quietly, he said, “Aren’t you living freely right now?”

Zi Xiu cast a lecherous sidelong glance to Feng Nu who was still eating Rogue Golden Jade Noodles. He teased, “Lad, you must seize the moment. I’ve had the pleasure of getting to know countless women, but I haven’t met anyone as good as her. It appears that she has a favorable impression of you. Find the opportunity to get her in bed with you. For woman, her first man will always leave a profound impression on her. As long as you work hard enough, she won’t ever leave you. From your looks, you’re definitely a virgin.

The taste of a beautiful girl is a great luxury of the mortal realm! Even a good dish can't compare."

Nian Bing went blank for a moment. When he finally understood, his face immediately flushed red. Flustered, he responded, "You are the lascivious camel, but I'm not a dirty old lecher. I don't have your interests, and I don't want to hurt anybody."

Zi Xiu knocked Nian Bing's head. Although he was shorter than Nian Bing, his arms were long. "Lemme hit your head. You stinky brat, women's hearts are extremely subtle. It's said that a woman won't love a good man. If a man isn't a bad boy, then the woman won't get on the bed. Even with my appearance, I can get beautiful female companions, so put your face to good use. Who knows how many beauties you could capture. Let me tell you, once you've had a taste of one, your cooking will change. When I was young, I had a poor understanding towards cooking. I was my master's worst disciple, but ever since I tasted a woman's flesh, I don't know why but my thoughts gushed forth. The thoughts one can only have to a woman's every complex emotion transformed my cooking. Different emotions produced a different dish."

Nian Bing's heart stuttered. The Camel Chef's reasoning seemed to be nonsensical. "Senior, could you tell me some of the details?"

Zi Xiu chuckled. "That is up to you. It's just like right now; your culinary skills showed a breakthrough when you competed against me. How did this breakthrough come about? A part of that was indeed me putting pressure on you, but it was mainly the encouragement of a beautiful girl that gave you determination.

Nian Bing, remember, humans produce the best food under two kinds of emotional states—great happiness and great sorrow. No matter whether it be excitement or sorrow, both can cause the culinary arts to reach its fullest extent, nothing held back. So, you must keep emotions in mind! The thing that can make your emotions stirred up the most is love. Boy, give it a try.”

Only several years later would Nian Bing completely understand. However, at that time he would be at the peak in the culinary world. After those two emotions, he would be studying a third.

“I’m stuffed! This was really a productive time. Nian Bing, you make really good food. I’m somewhat unwilling to part with you,” said Feng Nu as she put down her bowl in satisfaction. She looked at Nian Bing with eyes brimming with mirth.

Perhaps it was because of Zi Xiu’s influence, Nian Bing steps forward, bringing him right in front of Feng Nu. He said quietly, “I won. Are you going to honor your promise and let me kiss you now?”

Feng Nu giggled. “What did I promise you? I only said that if you won I would think it over. Also, b-before I already kissed you. You were paid in advance.”

Nian Bing replied dissatisfied, “How could that be paying in advance? Anyway, we’ll just say you owe me one. Okay, I didn’t ask you earlier, so when are you leaving? Where are you going?”

Feng Nu looked at everyone around her and said, “I am leaving

now. My goal has already been achieved, and I even got to eat delicious food. It's now time for me to leave. If fate wills it, we will meet again."

Nian Bing watched Feng Nu with disappointment. "I am also leaving here for Profound Orchid City. It would be nice if we were going in the same direction."

Feng Nu was surprised. "You aren't staying here to study?"

Nian Bing shook his head. "No, I've already learnt many things in my three months here, but it is time for me to leave."

Feng Nu grinned as her beautiful eyes flashed with amusement. "You really have something to do in Profound Orchid City?"

Nian Bing went blank, but he was quick to respond in pleasant surprise. "Could it be you're headed there too?"

Feng Nu smiled. "Yes! If it weren't for me not revealing it to others, I would definitely think you were intentionally trying to follow me." When she said this, she suddenly realized her subconscious slip of the tongue, and her pretty face flushed bright red.

Nian Bing laughed out loud. "You are very beautiful. It wouldn't be surprising if I were to go there just to be with you! Then we should travel together. I don't have much to pack up." After saying this, he walked over to Zi Meng. "Principal, I think, I will be

leaving.”

Zi Meng smiled and looked at Nian Bing, then Feng Nu. “Thank you for the delicious food you’ve served. It’s just a pity that the next time I get to eat your food won’t be for some time.”

“No way, you aren’t allowed to go,” was Hei Ye’s response. He wiped off the soup dribbling down his mouth.

Nian Bing was stunned temporarily. “Teacher, there really are things that I have to leave to do.”

Hei Ye looked at him coldly and stretched out his arm. “You stayed here for several months but haven’t paid your school fees. Pay up first, then you can leave.” When he said this, even he couldn’t stop himself from smiling.

Nian Bing thought for a while before sticking out his own arm. A light flashed, and a small box appeared on his palm. He presented it to Hei Ye with a smile. “Teacher, thank you very much for giving me your pointers for the past few days. This will be my school fee, please accept it.”

Hei Ye looked at the box made of lead. He looked at Nian Bing and accepted the box with suspicion. “What’s this?”

Nian Bing smiled. “Naturally, it’s something that suits your status. Open it, and you will know.”

Hei Ye gave Nian Bing a look and slowly opened the box. In an instant, the kitchen that had just returned to its original state after the treasured knives were put away was bathed by a golden light exuding a serene aura. The peaceful aura was a pure and holy sensation. The aura pervaded everyone's body and their gazes were naturally attracted to the box in Hei Ye's hand.

Hei Ye looked at the golden stone in his hand with surprise. As a magic scholar, how could he not know what this was? "Heavens! How many treasures do you even have? This is a pure Holy Brilliance Stone. And it's so big too! This is the first time I've seen one this big. Where did you finagle this from?"

"This was my winnings from a bet," he answered. "Teacher, although you don't cultivate light magic, it will improve your cultivation speed twofold."

Hei Ye looked at the soft golden light and his eyes showing his intoxication. Breathing in deeply, he covered the box again and stuffed it into Nian Bing's hands. "No, this is too precious. You have more use of it than I do. My cultivation has already settled, so it's no good. There's no way for me to break through into the magister realm. But you, you are different! This divine object that can stabilize your emotions is very useful for you. As long as you have this stone with you as you cultivate, there is no need to fear that your ice and fire will rebel."

"Father, Big Brother and I also want to go to Profound Orchid City." Zi Qing Meng's voice suddenly rang through his head. Right now, she was very calm, her violet eyes clear as water without any signs of emotion.

Zi Xiu replied, “Little Meng, what trouble are you trying to stir up. Today you’ve witnessed the level of Nian Bing’s culinary arts. You should know that you have to work much harder. Stay at the college and continue training in your culinary arts. You still haven’t graduated.”

Zi Qing Meng shook her head. “No, Second Uncle, I don’t want to go outside to raise my culinary arts. Big Brother and I want to enter the army. This term will end in two more days. Big Brother and I have already planned this. As the country rises and falls, the common man bears responsibility. Our Profound Orchid Empire has taken great losses from the Harmonic Flower and Strange Lu Empire. Big Brother and I must give our strength for the country.”

Zi Xiu frowned. “Our Zi Family only has you two as successors. If you go join the army and something happens to you, who will look after us when we get old? No way, I don’t agree. It’s too dangerous.”

“Never mind it, let them go. Young people should experience and see the world. They were always going to leave home, and the outside world will be good experience and training for them.” Zi Meng’s attitude was the exact opposite of Zi Xiu’s. His eyes were kind as he said, “You can go, but I don’t want you to make a fuss about your status in the Orchid Dream College. Since you want to join the army, then you must begin at the very bottom. Understanding the struggles of every different rank of soldier will be most advantageous to you. Do you understand what I mean?”

Zi Qing Jian’s voice boomed. “Dad, relax. Little Sister and I

definitely won't cause the Orchid Dream College to lose face. Brother Nian Bing, let's travel together. Just wait here for a moment. We need to prep a few things and then we can go."

Nian Bing couldn't really refuse Zi Qing Jian's proposal, but he was dissatisfied. It wasn't easy for him to get an opportunity to be with Feng Nu alone. Now that it was destroyed, he was really unwilling.

Feng Nu gave an icy smile. "It seems that our journey is a very bustling affair."

The air had long turned cold. Although the coldest month had already past, the air was still cold enough to pierce the bones. The trees lining the avenue were bald and desolate. As the north wind brushed passed the people's clothes, the sky was dark. Although it wasn't snowing, it wasn't enjoyable weather. The gloomy weather made it very easy for people to feel depressed.

Two hours earlier, Nian Bing, Feng Nu and the Zi siblings had said their farewells to Zi Meng, Zi Xiu, and Hei Ye. They departed from the college and the city and treaded upon the road to Profound Orchid City. They silently walked for two hours. Although Nian Bing was weaker than them in body strength, Feng Nu and the other two weren't using their martial arts to walk, so although it was tiring, he was able to keep pace.

Dark skies, oppressive atmosphere. The first one to become impatient wasn't actually Zi Qing Jian who had a straightforward temperament. Since they had left the college, Zi Qing Jian cast glances at Feng Nu from time to time. His mind was full of worry;

whether it be from being away from home or for some other reason, he didn't know.

“Feng Nu, I have something I want to ask you.” The first to speak was Nian Bing. He had spent the whole time walking with how to confront the Zi siblings, the best way to diverge paths with them. He had a favorable impression to Zi Qing Jian, but he was allergic to Zi Qing Meng's capricious temperament. He didn't like girls with poor personalities.

Feng Nu replied while walking, “I know what you want to ask. You guessed correctly, the first time we met I lied to you. But Hua Tian really is my master. And I didn't lie about why he died. As for the other things, could you please not ask? If there comes a time, I will tell you then.”

Nian Bing watched Feng Nu's neutral expression and inwardly sighed. He knew that there was no point in asking. Feng Nu and him were almost the same age, but she had nearly attained the strength of a martial saint. From just this, he knew she definitely wouldn't be so simple. Especially since Zi Meng had said that she had a Nine Flame Body. What did those words mean?

Feng Nu seemed to sense Nian Bing's internal dissatisfaction. She turned to him and smiled. “Don't you also harbor secrets in your heart? We're in the same boat.”

Nian Bing smiled calmly. “If I said I would trade my secrets for yours, would you go for it?”

Feng Nu huffed out a laugh. “Give me a break. I don’t believe that you would speak of your secrets so lightly. You look honest, but you are slyer than anyone else. Who knows what kind of story you will concoct to fool me.”

Nian Bing wore a put-upon expression. “You accuse me wrongly! Am I that kind of person?”

She snorted. “You aren’t? Not even considering other things, you won’t even explain clearly the details about your Ice and Snow Goddess’ and Flame God’s Stone.”

Nian Bing’s words stuck in his throat. It’s true, those two precious stones were left to him by his parents. They represented a part of his life that had to do with his secret. “Fine, I won’t ask you. However, the fact that you surpassed Senior Hua Tian’s Nine Heavenly Flame Qi is really weird to me.”

Feng Nu’s gaze sidled over to Nian Bing. “To put it simply, Hua Tian learnt the Nine Heavenly Flame Qi from my seniors. The reason why he passed down his forging skills and devoted to his life to forging swords was for a favor. I can only say this, but I hope you don’t mistake anything.”

Nian Bing’s heart stuttered. He strung together the past events in his mind and he instantly analyzed something. With a smile he said, “Feng Nu, Big Brother Qing Jian, we should take a rest up ahead.”

Chapter 55.1 - Mysterious Treasure Trove

Zi Qing Jian lifted his head, giving Feng Nu a look. Seeing both the latter and Nian Bing looking at him, and his bronze face suddenly flushed. Coughing he said, “Ah! Okay, let’s rest for a moment.” When they saw his embarrassed expression, Nian Bing gave Feng Nu a strange look, but Feng Nu just frowned. Zi Qing Jian was an honest and straightforward person, who was unable to hide his feelings. They all knew what this sturdy lout was thinking. Even Zi Qing Meng wasn’t satisfied with her brother’s attitude. She hit him, snapping him out of his daze.

The four people weren’t far from the edge of the forest and sat down facing the road. The ancient trees reached to the sky, however, there was no shade provided by the bald trees. The sounds of crows could be heard faintly as the cold wind brushed past. It was currently the coldest time of the year. Though Nian Bing was no martial artist and only had an ordinary constitution, he also had ice and fire magic protecting him. He only needed to circulate his magic power, and he could use the rank 2 ice body spell to block the cold.

As for Feng Nu, this level of cold was negligible.

Zi Qing Jian was a healthy young man and had exquisite qi, so this cold was nothing to him. This only left Zi Qing Meng, whose martial arts still hadn’t obtained a higher level and cultivated wind qi, shivering because of the cold wind rushing past.

They had left the college in a hurry. Zi Qing Meng was always cooped in the college, the majority of her time spent in a room.

Walking around outside was of a load on her mind, so she had only brought very simple clothing. When she realized that it was cold out it was already too late. She put on a jacket, but it would barely alleviate the onslaught of freezing air.

Zi Qing Jian's mind was on his worries, varied emotions were displayed on his face. He didn't notice his sister's plight at all. With Zi Qing Meng's arrogant personality, she definitely would n't ask her big brother for help. However, her face betrayed her wishes.

Nian Bing sat between Feng Nu and the Zi siblings. He wanted to talk to Feng Nu about what happened to them while they were apart, but because of Zi Qing Jian's move, he couldn't say much. He inadvertently glanced at Zi Qing Meng and saw her twisted expression and quaking body, and he couldn't stop himself from asking, "Miss Qing Meng, are you cold?"

Zi Qing Meng had been patient while they were walking, but now they stopped. The cold easily pierced her body, making her uncomfortable. When she heard Nian Bing, her heart stirred. She nodded. "Yes, I'm a bit cold."

When Zi Qing Jian heard their conversation, he awoke from his own thoughts. His head whipped around to look at his sister and was surprised to see a tinge of blue on Zi Qing Meng's lips. He was immediately frightened and speedily stripped off his outer clothes to cover his sister. "Little Meng, if you were cold why didn't you tell me?"

Zi Qing Meng snorted bitterly, "I don't need your clothes. You

aren't wearing much either, you should use them."

Nian Bing thought about using magic to summon up a ball of fire to warm all of them when Feng Nu suddenly stood up and walked over to Zi Qing Meng. "Elder Sister Zi, enduring the cold is bad for your body. If you damage your body's meridians, you'll fall ill."

She was smiling, making it easier for people to trust her. The bitter and jaded Zi Qing Meng had a change of mood after hearing Feng Nu's gentle and caring tone. She was about to say something when Feng Nu dropped a hand on her shoulder.

Warm qi flowed from Feng Nu's slender, jade-like arms into her body. This warmth steadily drove away the cold. Gradually, the warmth became scorching hot. No matter how cold the wind was, none of it could enter her body. This warmth was indescribably comfortable.

Lifting her hand, Feng Nu smiled. "Okay, my qi at least can prevent you from feeling cold for two hours. And all of the cold air in your body has been completely dispelled."

Zi Qing Meng stood and excitedly grabbed Feng Nu's arm. "Thank you, Miss Feng Nu."

Feng Nu smiled. "What is there to thank? We are all travelling companions; we should help each other out."

"No, no. Of course I must thank you. On behalf of my little sister,

thank you. From now on, if there is something I can do to help, I will give it my all.” Zi Qing Jian spoke somewhat incoherently as he got to his feet.

Nian Bing couldn't help but smile. He wasn't worried about Zi Qing Jian pursuing Feng Nu, it was just that he felt that his bumbling appearance was very adorable. “Feng Nu, I'm cold. Warm me up too, okay?”

Feng Nu shot Nian Bing a look. “Don't think that I'm completely ignorant about magic. Come on, both ice and fire magic can block out cold.”

Nian Bing grinned embarrassedly. “When I made food at the college, I consumed almost all of my magic power. How could I block out the cold?”

Feng Nu responded ill-temperedly, “Then use your True Sun Knife. If you wear it on you, then nothing could make you feel cold.”

Nian Bing saw Feng Nu not getting fooled and shook his head smiling. When he saw that head of pink hair, he became foolish.

Right at this moment, the crisp sound of horse's hooves came from the road. Right now, it was freezing outside, and Orchid Dream City was a rather isolated city, so there hadn't been many people on the nearby roads. The sudden sound of thudding horse hooves would attract everyone's gazes. There were ten riders speedily making their way over. They were also riding exceptional

horses; although they were moving forward very quickly, no clouds of dust formed beneath their feet. As they drew closer, it became obvious that these people were wearing heavy cloaks to defend against the cold. Each of them were in high spirits. Their figures atop their horses backs remained steady, displaying exquisite horsemanship.

“Eh,” said Nian Bing in suspicion as he stood. As the nearest four horsemen drew near, he called out, “President Ka Luo, is that you?”

“Halt!” The leader suddenly yanked back on the reigns. The steed whinnied and raised its legs in the air. As the galloping lead stopped, the following calvarymen also showed their long years of training. Without any disorder, they stopped right behind the lead rider.

“Ah! Nian Bing, it’s you! This is really a great coincidence.” The head rider jumped off his horse. It definitely was the president of the Ice Moon Empire Mercenary Association, Ka Luo. Underneath his large cloak he wore black armor and carried a long sword on his back. On the left chest portion of his cloak was a golden moon insignia.

Nian Bing went up to greet him and laughed. “Yes! It is very coincidental, President Ka Luo. Are you carrying out a mercenary mission?”

Ka Luo laughed heartily and went to meet Nian Bing. “Someone submitted a rank 1 mission which is extremely difficult for ordinary mercenaries to complete. I took it and brought my own

mercenary group to complete it. What are you doing here? Last I heard, you said you were going to Profound Orchid City?”

Nian Bing smiled. “I was going to Profound Orchid City, but because of something I was delayed for some time. Right now, I’m headed there. Have you gone to Ice Snow City yet?”

Ka Luo turned to signal to the mercenaries on horseback. “Move. We are going over to talk to the side; don’t block the road.” All of the mercenaries fluidly dismounted and moved to the side, one of them pulling Ka Luo’s mount.

Ka Luo saw Feng Nu and the others, his eyes flickering in surprise. “Nian Bing, are these your friends?”

Nian Bing saw the doubt in Ka Luo’s eyes and knew it was because of the women by his side. But how could he could explain? He merely answered, “Yes, let me introduce you. This is Feng Nu, and these two are siblings Zi Qing Jian and Zi Qing Meng. Feng Nu, Big Brother Qing Jian, and Miss Qing Meng, this is the Ice Moon Empire Mercenary Association’s President, Ka Luo.

The three and Ka Luo nodded in acknowledgement. Nian Bing took advantage of the opportunity to survey the mercenaries Ka Luo had brought with him. He was surprised to find that these mercenaries were wearing the exact same attire as Ka Luo, except their moon badges which were blue. Additionally, each of them had solemn expression and were over thirty years in age. They didn’t talk amongst themselves, each leading their horse to the side for a rest. Several of the mercenaries separated to stand in a regular pattern and acted as guards. From their temperaments, he

could discern that these mercenaries were at least stronger than the Silver Feather Cavalry that he saw before.

Ka Luo drew Nian Bing over to the side. He spoke excitedly, “Nian Bing, thank you very much for last time. I already went to speak with President Long in Ice Snow City and have come to an agreement on cooperation. We also came to a decision on the two association’s problems. Right now, our mercenary association and your Ice Moon Empire Mage Association have entered an alliance.”

“An alliance?” Though Nian Bing had thought that Long Zhi would choose to cooperate with the mercenary association, he hadn’t that they would make an alliance. This was because the mage association was considered to be the most noble of associations, while the mercenary association was a lower tier association. For Long Zhi to be able to throw away preconceived notions and firmly decide to work closely with the mercenary association could be said to be great foresight. This truly was the mage association’s best choice. “President Ka Luo, is it possible for you to tell details about what the alliance includes?”

“It includes everything you would think about cooperation,” said Ka Luo with a grin. “Our mercenary association will supply your distinguished association with all the necessary funding and resources. Your distinguished association will provide us with magic scrolls in return. The best thing is, twenty of your distinguished association’s mages will join my mercenary group which will greatly increase our mercenary troop strength. They’re also all advanced mages and higher and are led by Magic Scholar Li De.”

“This time, we weren’t sure about being able to successfully complete a rank 1 quest, but with Magic Scholar Li De and two other advanced mages participating, I am confident it will be successful. They went on up ahead; we were going to join them later. Nian Bing, President Long thinks very highly of you! How about it? Any interest in completing this task with us? No need to worry; the pay won’t be a problem.”

Nian Bing smiled back. “Not this time. My friends and I have to get going. There won’t be any effect without me anyway.”

Ka Luo showed his disappointment. “A pity, as it wouldn’t have taken up much of your time either. Our goal this time is a treasure trove. According to the employer, not only is the treasure trove filled with any kind of riches, it also has many different rare treasures like lost magic spells and martial arts books. If you will come help us, I will duly reward three items of your choice. How about it?

Gold and silver and riches couldn’t move Nian Bing’s heart, but lost magic spells stirred him up greatly. As Long Zhi had said, the realm of magic was gradually declining in part because many of the magic cultivation methods and stronger magic incantations from ancient times had been lost. If he could find a powerful spell useful for him, it would be highly advantageous. He exchanged looks with Ka Luo. “What sort of requirements does the employer have? Since there’s that much treasure, why doesn’t he go find it himself instead of employing you? Could it be that he’s not scared of you taking it all for yourself?”

Ka Lou’s expression darkened. “Nian Bing, you look down on us

too much. I established the Ice Moon Mercenary Group and it's renowned throughout the empire. It's the only first rank mercenary group in the Ice Moon Empire. Our reputation is our guarantee. Honestly speaking, the employer decided to give us the map and have us complete the task because the map is damaged. Moreover, according to the map, the treasure trove is cursed. This is also just one copy out of twelve of the map.

“We found that the other people with maps have assembled groups to find the treasure trove, but none were able to return alive. You can imagine how dangerous the treasure trove is, so that's why the employer was able to give us the map so easily. It could be said that this map is the reward he provided. If we find the treasure trove we can take all of the precious treasures. The employer only wants a legendary bottle. The other treasures will belong to our mercenary group.”

“A legendary bottle?” Nian Bing looked at Ka Luo with suspicion.

“The employer is a very mysterious middle-aged man. He only said that there was a black bottle in the treasure trove but didn't say what was so secret about it. He only wants us to give him that bottle. Besides giving us the other things in the treasure trove, he would also give us an additional 10,000 purple gold coins as remuneration. I think this bottle must be a magic item. To complete this quest, I brought all of the elite of the mercenary group. This is just one portion of people; the others are accompanying your association's three mages.

“Our Ice Moon Mercenary Group has in total, mobilized thirty-two Great Swordmaster, and including me, three Martial Masters,

as well as three mages. We are very strong. I think that no other mercenary association on the continent could match up to us. I am confident we can complete the task. If you come too, I can say so with unshakeable certainty.”

Chapter 55.2 - Mysterious Treasure Trove

If he said that he remained unmoved, it would be a lie. Just thinking of the possibility that such ancient magic spells existed impassioned Nian Bing. He nodded and said, “I will talk it over with my friends.”

Ka Luo grabbed the leather waterskin on his waist and took a swig from it. “I welcome your friends to join us. If they’re your friends, I’ll believe in them.”

He had an exceedingly good impression of Nian Bing. With Nian Bing’s aid, the Ice Moon Mercenary Group and the Ice Moon Mage Association had formed an alliance which elevated them from the strongest mercenary group in the Ice Moon Empire to one of the strongest in the Continent. Ka Luo wanted to repay Nian Bing for acting as his go-between. The current mission, although dangerous, would not be a problem as he was confident of the strength he had brought with him, so he decided to invite Nian Bing. . Inviting him was remuneration, but also a bribe. When Long Zhi and Ka Luo had been talking, he had hinted that he thought of Nian Bing as his successor.

In order to maintain the cooperation between the two associations, Ka Luo had been looking for a chance to meet with Nian Bing again, but he just hadn’t imagined that an opportunity would come so soon.

Nian Bing went over to Feng Nu and the others and quietly recounted the task that Ka Luo had described. “...So, how about it? Are you interested? Ka Luo brought quite a few experts with him,

so the treasure trove shouldn't pose much difficulty. If you don't want to join, then we'll part ways here." Nian Bing had already decided to follow Ka Luo since the allure of magic spells was too great.

Feng Nu's eyes twinkled. "I've got no problem with it. I'm in no rush to get to Profound Orchid City, so as this doesn't take too long I'll still have time to spare. However, I have a condition; If we really do find the treasure trove, I want to choose an item for myself. Of course, it won't be the bottle that the employer needs."

Nian Bing nodded. Then his gaze turned to Zi Qing Jian and his sister. "What about you two?"

Zi Qing Jian hesitated, his gaze shifting to his little sister. "Little Meng, why don't you go back to the college and wait for me. Sounds like it'll be dangerous, and I'm afraid..."

Zi Qing Meng snorted and said, "What's there to be afraid of? If you're going, then I'll go too. The reason we left the college in the first place was to learn through experience. This is a pretty good chance to do that!"

Nian Bing smiled. "Looks like there won't be any problems. If we all work together, there shouldn't be any problems with our strength." Just like Ka Luo had said, this time, the Ice Moon Empire had mobilized all of its elite. Including him, there were four magic experts of rank advanced mage and up, as well as Feng Nu, a martial saint. What could stop them?

He returned to Ka Luo. “President Ka Luo, we will participate in your task this time. However, I have a friend who has a request. If we find the treasure trove, she wants a single item as a reward.”

Ka Luo frowned. “Nian Bing, this is a very demanding request. Although I’m the leader of the Ice Moon Mercenary Group, this operation is very dangerous, and so the possibility of reaping rewards is high. Promising you to choose three items is already the most I can do. I can promise your friend some money, but, as for choosing items, I’m afraid...”

Nian Bing smiled. “President, there’s no need to be so troubled. You said I could choose three things right? Then, in that case, I’ll just choose two and leave the last for my friend. That wouldn’t be a problem for me. However, I believe that if we ever encounter any true danger, you’ll definitely see that my friend has the qualifications to choose an item for herself.” Nian Bing did not feel uncomfortable when Feng Nu had raised her condition. After all, Feng Nu had the strength to make such a request.

Ka Luo looked at Nian Bing in surprise, then at Feng Nu gripping her longsword. He said, “Then we will do as you say. We can deal with the specifics once we actually find the treasure trove. Nuo Qi, Ha De Ya, go grab your horses. Nian Bing, I’ll give you and your friends two horses. Once we arrive at a city, we will buy more.”

Nian Bing nodded. “Then, let’s set off!” The two mercenaries led their horses over to Nian Bing, but Nian Bing couldn’t help but feel troubled. Logically, he and Zi Qing Jian should be on one horse while Zi Qing Meng and Feng Nu rode the other. However, when the four were about to get on the horses, a problem appeared.

Although Nian Bing was tall, he wasn't particularly muscular. However, Zi Qing Jian's stature was one rarely found in this world. It would be difficult for the two of them to fit on a single horse, so he didn't know how they should distribute themselves. The Ice Moon Mercenaries had already given up two horses. When the two mercenaries had given up their horses, they looked so despondent that Nian Bing would feel very guilty asking them for another horse.

Zi Qing Meng suddenly spoke up and took large strides over to Nian Bing. "Then you and I can ride together, and Big Brother and Feng Nu can ride together. That should work."

Nian Bing went blank for a moment. When he raised his head, he saw Zi Qing Jian's eyes full of excitement. Zi Qing Jian had always regarded him as a brother. Although Nian Bing wanted to ride together with Feng Nu, how could he speak up now? Zi Qing Meng asked to ride together with him obviously because she wanted to give her brother a chance to get closer to Feng Nu. A strange feeling pervaded his heart which momentarily stopped Nian Bing from speaking.

Feng Nu walked over to Nian Bing and Zi Qing Meng. "Big Sister Qing Meng, can you ride a horse?"

Zi Qing Meng was stunned. She then shook her head and said, "I can't. Although I have always studied in the martial arts faculty, my heart has always been divided with cooking. I didn't have the time, like big brother did, to study horsemanship. However, I will definitely learn later. Feng Nu, my big brother is a wonderful rider so you don't need to worry. It won't be a problem if you and him

ride together.”

Feng Nu snorted and said, “I’m afraid that that won’t work. You can’t ride a horse, and neither can Nian Bing. How could you keep up with the group?”

Zi Qing Meng was stunned once more. She turned to Nian Bing. “You can’t ride a horse? But you are a man.”

Nian Bing laughed bitterly. “Why must a man be able to ride a horse? To me, there doesn’t seem to be an obvious connection. Moreover, I am a mage, not a warrior.”

Somewhat embarrassed, Zi Qing Meng said, “Then what should we do?”

Feng Nu grinned. “It’s fine. Nian Bing and I will ride together, and you and your brother will ride together. That should solve the problem. I have also studied a bit of horsemanship; riding with Nian Bing shouldn’t be too big of a problem.”

Nian Bing’s heart filled with happiness, though his face remained impassive. “Then let’s do it like that. Feng Nu, I will be troubling you.”

Feng Nu glanced back at him. “What trouble? You’ll have to be careful; I ride very fast.”

Zi Qing Jian was at a loss. Zi Qing Meng’s careful machinations

were futile due to her inability to ride a horse. She walked over to her big brother. “Let’s ride together.”

Zi Qing Jian nodded sadly and pulled himself onto the horse. When he put his weight onto its back, the steed whinnied and suddenly stood up on its high legs. Then it slammed its forelegs onto the ground, bucking up violently as if it wanted to throw Zi Qing Jian off.

Zi Qing Jian didn’t have time to consciously respond, but when he sensed the danger, he unconsciously pulled on the reins and plastered himself to the horse’s back. Green qi surrounded his body, making him light as a leaf and thoroughly adhering him to the steed. The steed now had no way of throwing him off. This horse had acted up at a bad time; right now,, Zi Qing Jian was currently in a dark mood. He reached out with his large hands, roughly tugging on the horse’s neck. He bellowed, “Behave, will you?” His body, currently as light as a leaf, suddenly turned a thousand times heavier. The horse bayed sadly and its four limbs were planted on the ground. It had no way of continuing its previous movements.

When he felt that horse gradually submit to him, Zi Qing Jian released his hand. He motioned to his sister, and she pranced onto the horse, settling lightly in front of him. She leaned back against his wide and firm chest.

“Great horsemanship,” Ka Luo couldn’t help but clap from the sides. He faced Nian Bing and shot him a frosty gaze. Nian Bing shrugged meaninglessly.

Nian Bing was a bit displeased. The horses they had been given were obviously specially trained horses. It wouldn't be easy for people other than their owners to ride them. He was trying to test his friends. Although Feng Nu's martial arts weren't bad, how was her horsemanship?

Just as Nian Bing was feeling doubtful, Feng Nu grabbed onto the reins of the other horse and a strange scene lay before their eyes. Her actions weren't as vigorous as Zi Qing Jian's, but from when she tugged on the reins to when she settled on the horse's back, the horse actually meekly submitted to her. Ka Luo and his underlings watched this wide-eyed. They knew that this horse was much more irascible than the other.

Nian Bing watched Ka Luo and his group's surprise. Although he felt a bit suspicious, he didn't ask anything. When he walked over to the horse, he felt somewhat awkward. Feng Nu was already holding the reins and her feet were in the stirrups. How was he supposed to get on? He didn't have any light body martial arts skills. Was he supposed to use a snowstorm? But the horse might not be able to bear the effects of his magic. Right at this moment, an arm as white as mutton-fat jade reached out for him. Feng Nu said, "Grab my hand."

The voice as beautiful as the sounds of nature fixed Nian Bing's heart. Eagerly, he grabbed the warm, slender hand. When he raised his head, all he saw was Feng Nu looking at him. Without waiting for him to say thanks, a warm force sent him flying. Fortunately, Nian Bing had experience flying on the snowstorm so he didn't make any sounds of surprise. His whole body shook, and he discovered that he was seated on the horse's back, Feng Nu's slender and pretty body in front of him. "Grab onto my waist to

steady yourself.”

When he saw Nian Bing and the others on their horses, Ka Luo waved his hands. All of the cavalryman simultaneously mounted their horses. The sound of horse hooves pounding against the road grew faster as they went along the main road.

At the moment, the most excited one was Nian Bing. He distinctly felt his heart pounding faster. Both hands were wrapped around Feng Nu's slender waist, a faint fragrance wafting up to his nose. His chest was pressed up against Feng Nu's back. It looked like he had encircled her in his embrace. A warm sensation emanated from her. Feng Nu's waist didn't have any excess fat at all. Even with several layers of clothing between them, Nian Bing could easily feel Feng Nu's flexible waist. A wonderful feeling filled up his body. Even if the horse was galloping forward, Nian Bing couldn't feel it. He was completely intoxicated by the atmosphere.

Feng Nu's feelings were even more intense than Nian Bing. Her whole back was pressed to Nian Bing's body, the feeling of his masculinity completely invading her. In particular, Nian Bing's large hands were hot against her waist making her face heat up. The beating of Feng Nu's heart wasn't any slower than Nian Bing's.

The team of horses continued to rush onward as the jostling ride atop the horse's back turned into a garden of pleasure. Nian Bing's arms were tightly wrapped around Feng Nu, and unconsciously, he hoped that it would never end.

At the very back of the group were the Zi siblings. Zi Qing Jian's

powerful arms protected his sister in front. While maneuvered his horse, extremely dejected. When he looked at Nian Bing and Feng Nu in front of him, his eyes blazed with complicated emotions.

“Big Brother, don’t think about it,” said Zi Qing Meng quietly. Zi Qing Jian’s whole body shook. “Me? I’m not thinking about anything.”

Zi Qing Meng sighed faintly. “Stupid Big Brother, your expression is easy to read. I know without you saying anything. Feng Nu and Nian Bing were obvious from the start. You might as well give up, or could it be that you can’t see it? Feng Nu and Nian Bing’s relationship isn’t something you can barge into. Feng Nu agreed to ride with Nian Bing. Don’t you understand?”

Zi Qing Jian went blank and said, “That’s because you and Nian Bing can’t ride a horse! Little Sister, I, actually I’m not hoping for anything.”

Zi Qing Meng smiled bitterly. “Stupid Brother, don’t think about it anymore. You and Feng Nu were never meant to be. Nian Bing is very good-looking and a great mage. In this respect, you’re more than a little inferior. Don’t let yourself fall in too deep, or it will be even harder for you to bear.”

Zi Qing Jian fell silent for a moment. “Little Sister, she is truly beautiful. When I first laid my eyes on her, she had already captured my heart. Brother Nian Bing is indeed stronger than I, and if she chooses him, then I will wish them happiness. I never expected her to like me, but is it wrong for me to like her?”

It was Zi Qing Meng's turn to be silent. She hadn't thought that her brother would be this infatuated. As the two were discussing this matter, a change appeared with Nian Bing's and Feng Nu's situation.

As she directed the horse forward, Feng Nu suddenly breathed out, "Nian Bing, what are you doing?"

Nian Bing suddenly woke up from the intoxicated haze he had fallen into from the warmth of Feng Nu's back. He discovered that a certain part of his lower body was having a response and was prodding into Feng Nu's butt. This discovery caused him great distress and he hurried to shift backwards. "Feng Nu, I-I- it wasn't on purpose."

Feng Nu's voice was equally shaky. "Qui-quickly make it go away." The firmness on her back had made her heart agitated as a strange feeling filled her body. Her martial saint strength was of no use in this moment as her beautiful body suddenly grew limp.

Chapter 56.1 - The Romantic Horseback Journey

Nian Bing loosened his grip on Feng Nu slightly. He wanted to move backwards, but the saddle wasn't big enough. If he wanted to move, where could he go? What he wanted even more was his little brother to go back down, but his little brother didn't listen and stubbornly remained erect. Feng Nu's bottom was rubbing against him and sent waves of pleasure through him, driving Nian Bing insane. His muscles tightened, and he lowered his head to whisper urgently into Feng Nu's ear, "It, it's not listening to me! Feng Nu, I really didn't do this on purpose, please don't take this the wrong way."

Feng Nu was close to tears now. The weather was so cold, but her heart felt like it was encased in flames. "C-can't you think of something else?"

Nian Bing laughed awkwardly. "Um, uh, I don't have a way to deal with this. Besides stopping and taking a rest, Feng Nu, why don't, uh, why don't you endure it for a bit. After a little while we should be able to take a break."

Feng Nu elbowed him hard in the ribs. With a hint of anger she said, "How could I endure this? Nian Bing, just die. If only I had known earlier I wouldn't have ridden with you."

Nian Bing withstood the pain, his thoughts immediately shifting. "Feng Nu, I'm just an ordinary man! Who told you to be so attractive?"

Feng Nu whispered harshly, “Idiot, can’t you use ice magic? Use it on yourself and see if that thing won’t go away.” When she was saying this, her pretty face was red as an apple. Fortunately, everyone else was facing forwards so no one discovered her predicament.

Nian Bing hesitated and said, “But that could injure me. Feng Nu, let’s just keep talking like this. The more we talk the more distracted you’ll be.

Feng Nu inhaled deeply, her words choking in her throat, “Nian Bing, I hate you to death. How am I supposed to face people from now on?”

Nian Bing nearly jumped in fright. He hadn’t thought that Feng Nu, who he had always thought of as strong, would actually cry. Instantly, it was like a bucket of cold water had been splashed on his face. His little brother finally retreated, returning to its usual position. Lowering his head, Nian Bing still held onto Feng Nu’s waist, though he maintained a distance between them as much as possible. Because of his touch, Feng Nu had cried. What did that mean? His heart, which had been burning because of Feng Nu, gradually cooled down. He said quietly, “Feng Nu, I am sorry. When we arrive and meet up with the mages, I’ll sit in the carriage. I will make sure that something like this never happens again.”

As the little brother behind her retreated, Feng Nu immediately returned to normal. Nian Bing’s calm tone of voice made her feel a bit strange. She wiped her tears as she said quietly, “What’s the use

of saying sorry. Also, sit properly; if you sit that far away you're going to fall off when we turn. Y-you, didn't you want to talk? What should we talk about?"

Nian Bing's heart thudded, and he once again wrapped his arms around Feng Nu's willowy frame. Smiling, he asked, "Then let's talk about you. How did you train in martial arts? I used to look down on you, but you were actually that awesome."

Feng Nu sighed lightly. "There is nothing in this world that can be achieved without hard work. It's true that I am here today because of my body's constitution, but I also cultivated for many years. I don't know who my parents are; I was raised by my seniors. According to them, the moment I was born they used all kinds of herbal baths on me to help bring out the characteristics of my body and raise my potential. When I was three years old, I started cultivating qi with the help of my seniors. When I turned seven, I had already become an advanced warrior. In that respect, I didn't have much of a childhood. My childhood was spent cultivating. This year, I am nineteen; I have lived for nineteen years and have cultivated martial arts for nineteen years." When she said this, her tone was laced with faint sorrow.

Nian Bing thought for a moment, then said, "That is to say, the special characteristics of your body is definitely the Nine Flame Body that Principal Zi Meng spoke of?" At this moment, his state of mind was stable. Even though Feng Nu was alluring as ever, his logical reasoning was taking hold. He wouldn't forget himself like he did before.

Feng Nu's delicate frame trembled slightly. She said quietly,

“Nian Bing, I know that you are very smart, but don’t make wild guesses about this. I know that it won’t do you any good. Do you get what I mean?”

Nian Bing smiled and said, “As long as you don’t say anything to other people, how would anyone else know what I do about you? For you to have been raised to have such strength, your backing must be extremely powerful.”

She replied, “Let’s not talk about me. Let’s talk about you. You already told me that your parents died and you self-cultivated your magic. How could someone with no guidance become a great mage at this young of an age? And you are also cultivating Ice and Fire Source magic. I think that you don’t have any less secrets than I do. Nian Bing, sometimes I feel like you are just an ordinary boy, but at other times, you seem like a contemplative sage, neither happiness nor anger flowing through you. J-just now was the first time I felt that you’d truly let loose.”

Nian Bing sighed. “Actually, I am not as mysterious as you imagine. There is only hatred in my heart, and because of this hatred, everything else is dispensable. I cannot live under the same sky as my parents’ enemy. Right now, I only have two goals. First, to carry out my master’s dream and to develop my own culinary arts further, and second, to avenge my parents. However, my enemy is far too strong, so even I do not know when I will have the strength to match up to them.”

Feng Nu said, “Maybe I could help you. Who is your enemy?”

It was an attractive proposition. Feng Nu was already close to

martial saint realm. With her help, the chances of getting revenge would improve greatly. However, Nian Bing shook his head, “No, this revenge is mine alone.”

Further ahead, Ka Luo slowed down drastically, breaking away from the main group. He waited for the other riders to pass him, drawing level with Nian Bing and Feng Nu. “Nian Bing, you’re a mage. Are you all right with riding for this long?”

Nian Bing smiled and replied, “I’m fine. It should be fine temporarily. Feng Nu is a very good rider and this horse runs very steadily. President Ka Luo, where are we going?”

Ka Luo said, “We are going to the Tian Dang Mountains which are about six hundred kilometers from Profound Orchid City. According to the map, we can find the treasure trove there. When we get to the mountain range, we’ll ditch the horses and proceed on foot. But no need to worry, I have already made arrangement for warriors to help you and the other mages to traverse the mountain roads.”

Feng Nu made a sound of surprise. “The Tian Dang Mountains are on the easternmost portion of the Profound Orchid Empire. Past that is the Profound Orchid Sea. It can be said that the Tian Dang Mountains are the Profound Orchid Empire’s natural border. No matter how the ocean churns and surges, it cannot break through the hundreds of kilometers of mountains. And, because the Tian Dang Mountains and the Profound Orchid Empire are so close together, there is no land to plow near the mountains. So the Tian Dang Mountains are extremely desolate and signs of human habitation are rare.

“If we go there to search for the treasure trove, the logistics of supplies will become problematic. Also, the Tian Dang Mountains are not of importance to the empire, so there aren’t any roads there. With tangled and wild undergrowth and craggy passages, it seems that this quest will be very difficult!”

Ka Luo looked at Feng Nu with renewed surprise. “I didn’t think that Miss would be so familiar with the geography of the continent. What you said is exactly the same as what I’d researched. The situation with the Tian Dang Mountains is complex. There are many unknown dangers there. If not, this treasure trove would not be called a cursed treasure. However, you don’t need to worry about surprises. The association has spent a large sum of money to buy several high quality space rings which can store large quantities of goods. It should be enough for several months’ worth.

“Also, the treasure trove is located on the northwest part of the mountain range, not too far from where we enter. So, if everything goes smoothly, it might take us just half a month to complete the mission. If we meet danger that we cannot deal with, we should have enough supplies for us to leave the mountain range. Of course, I hope that such a situation wouldn’t happen. All in all, I am very confident about our prospects.”

Nian Bing nodded. “I hope that it will go just as smoothly as you said. For food, I suggest you prepare vegetables, rice, and seasonings. We can replenish meat directly from the mountains, and it would be best to pack some simple medicines. Of course, large quantities of freshwater are absolutely necessary. If we only bring rations, everybody will become nutrient deficient, and our

strength will take a hit. As for what herbs can be used in cooking, I can give you a list and you just need to go buy them. They're all good for muscles and nutrition."

Ka Luo frowned. "Nian Bing, I'm afraid that won't work. We mercenaries are not so pampered like you mages. We normally only prepare the most simple of rations. If we bring as many things as you say, then wouldn't we need a chef to come with us to the Tian Dang Mountains?" Nian Bing was young after all, and though he greatly appreciated Nian Bing, he felt that his request this time was too much.

Feng Nu laughed. "You don't need to worry about that. Nian Bing is not only an exceptional mage, but he is also an excellent cook. His food is the most delicious I've ever eaten."

Ka Luo was stunned for a moment. "A chef? This..."

Nian Bing grinned sheepishly. "No need to feel awkward. Where are we lodging tonight? You will understand what I mean then. Please, don't worry. I definitely won't cause trouble for you." As a top-class chef, his requirements for food were very high. Other than times where he's as focused as he was when he was in the library completely consumed by magic research, he wanted to cook his own food as much as possible. Even if it was just a simple bowl of white rice, Nian Bing could produce a completely different flavor.

Ka Luo said, "Then we will talk about it again. Before we go into the Tian Dang Mountains, our last supply stop will be the closest city to the mountains, Tian Dang City. Right now, the other group

must already be there, preparing the things we'll need when we go into the mountains. Once we get there, we'll rest up for a bit and then enter the mountains. If we travel through the night, we might be able to get there by midnight. Once the sky turns dark, we'll find a place to eat rations, rest, and then continue on our way. Nian Bing, if you can't keep up then just say it. It won't be a problem if we are late."

Ka Luo returned to the front of the troop; his concern made Nian Bing's impression of the mercenary association president very good.

"Nian Bing, things might not be so easy," said Feng Nu in a very grave tone.

Nian Bing made no movements nor sounds. "Why? Is there an issue?"

Feng Nu nodded. "The Tian Dang Mountains are very desolate, but there's great danger there. From what I know, there's a strange clan residing there."

Nian Bing blanked out. "A strange clan?"

"Yes. They're very strong. If possible, I suggest you advise President Ka Luo that it would be best to terminate this operation."

Nian Bing barked out a laugh. "I'm afraid that isn't possible.

President Ka Luo mustered these many elite mercenaries obviously because he is determined to finish the task. Now, who could possibly dissuade him? Feng Nu, what is this clan like for you to be so concerned?”

Feng Nu sighed. “Although humans dominate the continent, there are also a few mysterious clans. Although they very rarely come in contact with humans and are completely self-centered, if humans encroach on their interests, they will ruthlessly attack and annihilate them. As for what kind of clan they are, I cannot say, but we should probably retreat.”

Nian Bing felt somewhat awkward. “But I already promised President Ka Luo; it would not be too good for me to back out now. Perhaps the treasure trove we’re looking for is unrelated to the clan you spoke of?” He was becoming more suspicious of Feng Nu’s true identity. But he knew that no matter how he asked, if Feng Nu didn’t want to answer, she definitely wouldn’t say anything.

Feng Nu sighed lightly again. “Since it’s like that, then I will accompany you for this trip. I hope it’s just as you said, that this operation is unrelated to that clan. After all, the Tian Dang Mountains are very big and there aren’t many of this clan. Perhaps they don’t live on the northwestern part at all. However, you must promise me, if we meet that clan you must immediately leave with me, even if it means abandoning your companions. If not, even I am not certain I can save your life.”

When he heard Feng Nu be so serious, Nian Bing felt somewhat doubtful, but when he thought of the ancient magic spells Ka Luo spoke of, all thoughts of escaping were dispelled. Although he did

have understanding towards his Ice and Fire Source, he still wasn't certain that he could fuse his two magics as he imagined. These ancient magic spells might be useful for deepening his magic and his cultivation. In order for revenge, he chose to take the risk.

Chapter 56.2 - The Romantic Horseback Journey

Time gradually slipped by. Eventually, the sun started to set on the western horizon, which left only the cold, winter wind circling around the reddening sky. In this time, Feng Nu had used her Nine Flame Qi twice to protect Zi Qing Meng against the cold. On the road, the Zi siblings seldom talked, particularly since the normally cheerful Zi Qing Jian was so obviously dejected. Both Nian Bing and Feng Nu knew why, but they didn't say anything to avoid an awkward situation.

In the beginning, Nian Bing didn't feel too much because of Feng Nu, but after four hours of horse riding, the jolting of the horse gradually became too much. All of his bones felt like they were shaken loose, especially his hips. At this moment, he was leaning against Feng Nu's body, gripping her waist to reduce the impacts he was receiving. Fortunately, he was vigilantly controlling his body so something like before wouldn't happen again. The faint fragrance emanating from Feng Nu's body was a major motivator for him. Despite his discomfort, resting his head against her long, pink hair, sniffing that delightful scent, and feeling the touch of her wonderfully supple body had made him less than inclined to end this journey too soon.

"It's dark out. Let's rest for a bit," Ka Luo's voice filtered backwards from up front, then the horses which had been charging forward began to take smaller strides. Under Ka Luo's command, everyone stopped at a gentle slope. One after the other, the warriors dismounted, speaking volumes about their training; the pace of this journey had been relaxing for them.

“Hey, let go of me. Haven’t you hugged me enough?” said Feng Nu, reproach evident in her tone. It was only then that Nian Bing reacted, reluctantly letting go of Feng Nu. A gust of hot air suddenly blew through him. Nian Bing felt his body become light. Something beneath his feet shook, and he found that he had fallen on the ground. Feng Nu then tugged on his arm.

The sore, swollen feeling of his hips made Nian Bing temporarily lose the ability to walk. He forced himself to move and thought to himself, This horse riding business is nothing good! Fortunately, he had been accompanied by a beauty; otherwise this journey would have been unbearable.

The Zi siblings walked over to them. Although Zi Qing Meng looked exhausted, she was in far better shape than Nian Bing. After all, a mage’s greatest flaw was their physical strength.

Feng Nu let go of Nian Bing’s hand and went behind him. She pressed her palm against his lower waist, and immediately, a shot of Nine Flames Qi surged through him. The stream ran along his vessels, instantly travelling through Nian Bing’s body. The scorching feeling was very comfortable, almost making Nian Bing moan. The discomfort in his body had mostly disappeared, leaving him warm and indescribably relaxed.

He turned to look at Feng Nu. The journey had taken merely four hours, but Nian Bing clearly felt that he and Feng Nu had become much closer. “Thank you, it’s a lot better.”

Feng Nu smiled. “What’s there to thank me for? I didn’t do it because I wanted to help you. If I didn’t fix your body’s condition

then how would you be able to make me any food? Didn't you want to show off your culinary skills to President Ka Luo? It's best if he agrees to bring more non-rations ingredients into the mountains."

Nian Bing attempted to hold Feng Nu's hand, but she dodged his arm and glared at him. Nian Bing chuckled. "It's fine, there is still more trail to trod." His meaning was very obvious. Before they got to Tian Dang City, he could still hold onto Feng Nu as they would be riding for some time.

Feng Nu added in a huff, "Just go and cook."

Nian Bing laughed and said, "As you wish. I shall fulfill my duty." He walked over to President Ka Luo.

Zi Qing Jian looked at Zi Qing Meng. "You go and help Nian Bing. With this many people, it might be too much for him."

Zi Qing Meng gave her older brother a look. She knew that he still hadn't given up on Feng Nu, but nodded and followed Nian Bing.

Feng Nu was not going to avoid Zi Qing Jian. She walked over to a large rock over to the side and sat down. Zi Qing Jian followed after her, taking off the broadsword on his back and setting it aside. He passed a waterskin to Feng Nu, then said, "Miss Feng Nu, have some water."

Feng Nu smiled and shook her head. "Big Brother Qing Jian, you

also have to rest for a bit. I don't want to drink. I was going to wait here for a while before eating Nian Bing's delicious food!"

Zi Qing Jian somberly took back his waterskin and drank from it. He sat down next to her. "Miss Feng Nu, how did you train your martial arts? You're really amazing. I've trained since I was young, but I only have the strength of a great swordmaster."

Feng Nu answered, "Martial arts cultivation must be taken step by step. It's probably because my techniques are much more precise. You aren't that old and have already reached the great swordmaster realm. That's already really good. Also I can tell that at most three years, you'll become a martial master. Train hard, and you will definitely succeed."

Zi Qing Jian looked at Feng Nu's moving smile and couldn't help but be struck dumb. "Miss Feng Nu, are we friends?"

"Of course, we're already friends."

Zi Qing Jian lowered his head and said, "How did you and Nian Bing get to know each other? It looks like you both are very familiar with each other."

"We're fairly familiar," she replied. "Nian Bing's a good person and makes delectable food. Actually, we haven't known each other for very long; not even half a year."

"Not even half a year?" Zi Qing Jian's voice betrayed his

excitement.

Feng Nu smiled faintly. “Although we haven’t known each other for long, we are the same kind of people. We both have a goal that can’t be changed by outside circumstances. He’s like that, and so am I. That’s why we’re friends, like why you and me are friends.” Her eyes were filled with a deep emotions as she looked at Zi Qing Jian. Then she closed her sky-blue eyes and sealed her lips.

Zi Qing Jian blanked for a moment. Although he was honest and straightforward, he wasn’t an idiot. He knew what Feng Nu was trying to say, but he wouldn’t back down because of that. Instead, he thought optimistically. He believed that maybe since Nian Bing didn’t want to get into a relationship with Feng Nu, she might want to become closer to him.

While Zi Qing Jian and Feng Nu were talking, Nian Bing was showing off his near perfect cooking skills. When Ka Luo saw Nian Bing had taken out the dazzling Proud Sky Knife and was using seasoning and flame to turn the plain rations into delicious food, he really couldn’t believe his eyes. Especially at the end when Nian Bing took out a giant pot, condensed ice, and added a smattering of ingredients to make some piping hot soup. He had to use all four limbs to support the pot as he brought it over.

This simple meal had ingratiated Nian Bing with the warriors of the mercenary troop. Though conquering their stomachs might not conquer their hearts, it was enough to make these strong warriors acknowledge his existence.

After the meal, everyone rested for a moment before tramping

along the road to Tian Dang City. Of course, Nian Bing still rode with Feng Nu, easily hugging her alluring, slender waist. What made Feng Nu laugh was his body couldn't adapt to the long-distance riding. His whole body was practically stuck to her back, making the contact between them more intimate. Nian Bing also thought about the rarity of such a great opportunity. If he didn't take advantage of it to its fullest, wouldn't that be a big loss? Finding another chance like this would be hard. Also, since Feng Nu was so stunning, how could Nian Bing not be moved? Fortunately, he was a lot more restrained than he was before. His little brother listened to him, no longer raising the flag.

“Nian Bing, your seat should be pretty good already; you're body shouldn't be feeling that terrible. Just now, when we ate, I already helped ease your tendons and vessels,” said Feng Nu in displeasure.

“Ah! Sorry, When Senior Zi Xiu and I were competing I used a lot of my spirit power, and we also spent half a day travelling. I'm so tired. I'm just a mage! I can't compare to martial arts cultivators like you. Feng Nu, your qi is so strong, so support me for a moment. I'm going to sleep.” He even directly rested his head on Feng Nu's shoulder and breathed in her sweet scent. So beautiful!

Feng Nu was both embarrassed and angry. She wanted to shrug off Nian Bing but was afraid that he would fall. Moreover, his body heat made Feng Nu's beautiful figure go weak, making her unable to use her qi against him. “You bastard, sit up! What do you think this looks like?”

Nian Bing said lackadaisically, “I've been hugging you for half a day already. Perhaps most of the people here think that our

relationship isn't so ordinary. Since it is like that, just let me sleep for a bit. Feng Nu, you're too thin, your shoulder is bony..."

"You, you scoundrel..."

"Eh, how did you know my childhood name?"

"You, lecher..."

"Oh, you even know my formal name."

"I'm going to throw you off..."

"Then there won't be anyone to make you food."

"I'm angry..."

"No problem. Once we get to Tian Dang City, I will make you some soup that revitalizes your qi. I guarantee that once you drink it you won't be angry."

Nian Bing resisted the urge to smile. As he heard Feng Nu's labored breaths, a wave of fatigue hit him, and he fell asleep. It was hard for him to find such a comfortable posture, so of course he wouldn't move.

Feng Nu's shy feeling gradually disappeared. Because Nian Bing

was closely plastered on her back, she could clearly feel Nian Bing's long, steady breaths. This bastard, h-he actually fell asleep on my shoulder! Eh, there's some kind of cold sensation on my shoulder. Turning her head to look, she was infuriated to find that Nian Bing had drooled onto her shoulder. When the wind blew, the cold sensation intensified.

Nian Bing, I'm going to kill you. Feng Nu tightened her grip on the reins, her mind awhir with ideas on how to torment Nian Bing. However, when they arrived at Tian Dang City, she didn't plan on carrying them out at all. His sleeping expression had been so serene, only a single line of saliva dribbling out of his smile. He looked so satisfied, his face unlike his mischievous personality. He looked so child-like that Feng Nu didn't have the heart to wake him.

"Aiyo," an intense jolt and pain awoke Nian Bing from his slumber. Rubbing his eyes, he looked about himself in a daze. His surroundings were pitch black, and a cacophony of voices as well as the neighing and clattering of horses made his mind tumultuous.

"Get up, we're here." Feng Nu's voice caressed his ears, immediately setting Nian Bing at ease.

"Feng Nu, we got here so quickly, I'm still tired. Let me use your shoulder as pillow." Nian Bing climbed up from the ground, looking for his comfy pillow.

"Ah! That's hot! Feng Nu, what are you doing?" Nian Bing jumped from a lick of scorching flame.

Feng Nu leaned close to him, grabbing his lapels. Rancorously she said, “Nian Bing, I didn’t think that you were that bad. Hmph, just you wait.”

Nian Bing blinked, not comprehending. “H-how am I bad?”

Feng Nu pointed to the drool marks on her shoulder. “Look at this. See what you did?”

Nian Bing went blank. With the red brilliance of her qi, he could faintly discern a damp patch on her shoulder. “C-could this be my...”

Feng Nu pinched his arm fiercely. “Stop talking nonsense. If it wasn’t you, then who could it have been? How are you going to compensate me?”

He looked at her with embarrassment. After thinking for a moment, he answered, “If that’s no good, how about I sleep a bit more on your other shoulder and leave another mark on you. I reckon the visual effect will be much better.”

“You...”

Not waiting for Feng Nu to rip into him, Nian Bing turned tail and ran. At the moment, his vision had recovered. He was able to see the door to an inn, bathed in the pale yellow of two lanterns. Ka Luo was directing the horses into the courtyard to settle down.

“President Ka Luo, we’ve arrived in Tian Dang City so quickly?” Nian Bing ran over to greet him.

Ka Luo smiled and said, “With a beauty in your arms, of course you would feel it went quickly. But your friend’s horsemanship is stellar! Even our fiercest horse was tamed. Nian Bing, you don’t lack luck with women! When the time is right you must make your move. Don’t squander your youth! Hehe.”

Seeing Ka Luo with the deviousness of an old man, Nian Bing felt embarrassed. “Wh-what are you talking about. When could I have made a move on her? There will probably be another opportunity.”

Right then, a soft, alluring voice suddenly came from inside the courtyard. “President Ka Luo, you’re here. Uncle Li De and I were afraid that you wouldn’t make it today.”

Nian Bing’s whole body shook. That was a voice he was all too familiar with. Not waiting for his response, a sweet woman’s figure wrapped in a white fox skin emerged from the inn. However, from her pale yet comely face it was obvious that she had lost some vitality. She was the daughter of the Ice Moon Empire’s Mage Association President, Long Zhi: Long Ling, the Gentle Girl.

“Nian Bing? Is it, is that really you?” Long Ling’s face was growing more pale, her eyes were reddening, and her gaze was becoming incredulous as she looked at Nian Bing. Her soft lips trembled slightly.

“Ling’er, what are you doing here?” Nian Bing’s heart ached when he saw Long Ling. He hurried over to take her hands. Long Ling’s hands were like ice, ice that could send a chill through people’s hearts.

Chapter 57.1 - Long Ling, Reunited

Long Ling's face flushed. She forcefully pulled her hands away from Nian Bing's and stepped back. Quietly, she said, "Mage Nian Bing, men and women are different. Please be mindful next time."

Nian Bing stared blankly, then inclined his head to Ka Luo. "Is Ling'er participating in this operation?"

Ka Luo nodded and replied, "Yes, Magic Scholar Li De brought Great Mages Long Ling and Feng Yun to take part. Since you're all from the same association, you should all mesh very well together."

Long Ling politely nodded at Ka Luo. "Please, don't worry, President. We will definitely assist you to the best of our abilities. It is already late, however, so please excuse me." She didn't look at Nian Bing again, and simply returned to the courtyard.

Ka Luo smiled a not-smile at Nian Bing. "Is there a misunderstanding between you and Miss Long Ling? Ah, young people. You really don't want to whittle down your spirit because of too many emotional entanglements."

Nian Bing forced a smile and shook his head, preferring to stay silent. But the horsemen who had yet entered the courtyard looked at him with different expressions.

"Another one. You really are a lecherous wolf." Zi Qing Meng bumped into Nian Bing, then went into the courtyard.

Zi Qing Jian sighed at him, then turned back to look at Feng Nu before following his sister.

Nian Bing laughed bitterly in his heart. Who did I offend? Why am I a love-em-and-leave-em bastard in their eyes? I have been wronged!

Everyone else had already went into the courtyard, leaving only Feng Nu and Nian Bing lingering at the entrance. Feng Nu walked up next to Nian Bing and stopped to watch him with a face of hesitation. With a soft smile she said, “You don’t need to explain anything. We are friends, so I choose to believe you.”

Nian Bing’s heart filled with joy. Finally someone saw reason. However, his excitement very soon turned into an illusion, because of Feng Nu’s next words. “We’re just friends.” She who cultivated the Nine Flames Qi, suddenly felt a layer of chill around her.

The night was deep. As he stood in the cold, Nian Bing felt a wave of helplessness. He walked around and looked around aimlessly. Anyway, he wasn’t doing anything bad, so he didn’t need to care about how other people saw him. Silence is golden, silence is golden!

The next morning, Ka Luo announced that they would rest for a day. They were to carry out their planned purchases in Tian Dang City. Nian Bing had quickly written a list of all the food related purchases, then retreated to his room for the whole day.

Night had fallen when a knocking sound suddenly came at his door. “Nian Bing, let’s eat dinner,” came Zi Qing Jian’s resonant voice from outside the door.

Nian Bing sighed deeply and roused himself from his meditative state, feeling the magic power brimming inside him. The events of yesterday seemed to have turned into the past. Feng Nu was fine, Long Ling was fine. His goals wouldn’t be affected by them.

Opening the door, Zi Qing Jian spiritedly charged in. “Brother, you didn’t eat lunch. What were you doing in your room all alone? Let’s go and eat. It’s all been prepared. President Ka Luo is going to describe the particulars of the operation.”

Nian Bing smiled. “Big Brother Qing Jian, your mood seems to be very good today!”

Zi Qing Jian laughed loudly. “Happy occasions make a happy man. Today, I asked Miss Feng Nu many questions related to martial arts. I have gained much. Miss Feng Nu is far above me in terms of martial arts talent.”

Nian Bing’s heart was filled with an indescribable forlornness, but he soon returned to normal. “I must congratulate you, Big Brother. The more you exchange pointers with people stronger than you, the better your own strength becomes.”

Zi Qing Jian then shut the door behind him. His words were solemn. “Nian Bing, what is your relationship with the girl from yesterday?”

Nian Bing went blank, but then frowned and said, “Big Brother, this is my private matter. I don’t wish to speak of it.”

Zi Qing Jian said, “That miss looks very fragile—like a strong wind would knock her down. I saw her several times today but she never smiled. Her iciness was full of sorrow, while you refuse to tell me what relationship she has with you. Nian Bing, did you do something that you need to be sorry for?”

“Enough.” Nian Bing’s eyes flashed dangerously. As he looked at Zi Qing Jian, his body emanated an intense chill. “Big Brother Qing Jian, I don’t want to talk to you about this. As I said, this is my private matter, so please do not interfere. Let’s go and eat.” After he said this, he walked around Zi Qing Jian, opened the door, and left.

Zi Qing Jian stood in place, dumbstruck. This was the first time he had seen Nian Bing lose his temper. Just now, Nian Bing had been exploding with an abnormally powerful aura. Even with his great swordmaster strength, he was actually unable to breathe.

Dinner was held in the inn’s eating hall. Before Ka Luo had arrived, the entire inn was reserved by his underlings. Besides the inn staff, everyone was a member of the Ice Moon Mercenary Group.

Dinner was very filling. Chicken, duck, fish, and meat was served in great bounty. All the dishes had been served by the time of Nian Bing’s arrival; though of course, this food was nothing in his eyes.

Nian Bing took a look around, seeing Li De, Long Ling and the great mage Feng Yun sitting at the head table. There was an empty space next to Li De. Without asking, he knew that it was for him. After all, he was part of the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association. Without hesitating, he strode over to the empty spot, calling out in greeting to Li De and the others, then sat down.

Long Ling's expression remained very level. Just as Zi Qing Jian had said, her cold aura was tinged with sadness. He sighed silently. Ling'er! Am I really worth so much to you?

Long Ling did not seem to see Nian Bing and kept her gaze fixed straight ahead. Li De and Feng Yun nodded to Nian Bing, but no one said anything. Someone as smart as Nian Bing naturally understood where their coldness was coming from. But he didn't mind it and sat down, digging into his meal while looking around him.

Feng Nu and Zi Qing Meng were seated at a table not far from him. At the moment, Zi Qing Jian walked in and sat down next to Feng Nu. Nian Bing had a calmness that not only stopped in his outward expression but also continued in his heart. He simply thought about the stage of his magic cultivation and did not get upset by the awkward atmosphere.

"Good, everyone's here now. Dig in everyone; this is our last dinner before we set off. Early morning tomorrow, we will enter the Tian Dang Mountains. Horses and unnecessary items will be left at the inn. I have already paid the inn for three months. If the task goes smoothly, we should be back in time.

“We, the Ice Moon Mercenary Group, have set out with our full strength to accomplish the task requested of us, and we have also obtained the great support of the empire’s mage association. I am full of confidence that we can complete the mission, but there is one thing I want to remind everyone: Though we are strong, there are many unknown dangers in the Tian Dang Mountains. If anyone pushes us back because of their own carelessness, then don’t blame me for being merciless. We should all be working for the entire group’s interests. I won’t say anything else, for the majority of you are veterans of the mercenary group. I believe in you.”

Ka Luo’s gaze was powerful as he watched the faces of his troop. He emitted an equally powerful aura.

Nian Bing watched Ka Luo. There was a forty-year-old person on either side of him. The one on the left had an ice-cold face, dressed in the same leather-armor of the mercenary group as an obvious attempt at coordination. Although he was getting along in his years, he still faintly had the svelte of his youth. It was just a pity that his handsome face was marred by a deep, jagged scar on his left side.

The one on his right was a woman. She was also the only in the whole Ice Moon Mercenary Group who wasn’t wearing the standard mercenary outfit. She wore a fiery red dress, which gave her bucket-like figure an unharmonic feeling. Her short brown hair was all tangled, and her large, flatbread-like face was caked in makeup. Even so, it could not disguise the hemp seed-sized bumps all over her face. Every time her gigantic body shifted slightly, a layer of cosmetics would float down. Anyone who saw her would probably have their appetite take a hit.

When he felt Nian Bing's gaze, the middle-aged man made no outward indication of it, but the 'bucket's eyes sparkled and flashed Nian Bing a smile, immediately cracking her makeup. A mouthful of jagged yellow teeth made Nian Bing almost spit out the tea in his mouth. Forcing himself to smile, he quickly turned in a different direction, feeling a chill that made his hair stand.

Finally, he began eating. Nian Bing partook of his meal neither quickly nor slowly. Learning from his past experiences, he did not dare to randomly look around. Now, Ka Luo had walked over to him. With a smile, he said, "Nian Bing, come with me. I will introduce you to the two vice-captains of our mercenary group."

Nian Bing laughed bitterly inside. Without guessing, he knew who the vice captains were. Following Ka Luo, Nian Bing went over to his table. Ka Luo first pointed to the middle-aged man Nian Bing had saw before. "This is one of the vice captains of the Ice Moon Mercenary Group, Jia Te Lin, martial expert. He is much stronger than me."

Jia Te Lin and Nian Bing exchanged looks. He then brusquely said, "Hello."

Nian Bing smiled and replied, "Hello, I am Nian Bing."

"Get, get, get, Jia Te Lin, you go over there. Don't bar my introduction." A pungent fragrance made Nian Bing nearly pass out. Jia Te Lin was shoved over to the side by the 'bucket,' his face not changing at all. The 'bucket' laughed. She was actually just as

tall as Nian Bing, yet her figure was full enough for four Nian Bings. As she stood there, her figure resembled a wall. She might have even weighed more than Zi Qing Jian. “Hello, Little Brother Nian Bing. I am Hua Rui, but you can call me Rui Rui. I am also a vice-captain of the Ice Moon Mercenary Association. From now on we will become much closer.”

When Nian Bing heard the nickname ‘Rui Rui’, his heart grew cold. If all flowers looked like you, there might not be any flowers on the continent. “Hello, Miss Hua Rui. It is very nice to meet you.”

When she heard Nian Bing address her as ‘miss’, Hua Rui immediately burst with joy. “Hee hee, Little Brother Nian Bing, what discerning eyes you have. With one look you knew I was a maiden; I have never been married.” While saying this, she gave Nian Bing coquettish eyes.

Nian Bing lowered his head, saying silently, Looking ugly is not your fault, but coming out and scaring people is.

Ka Luo naturally knew that Nian Bing was uneasy. He hurried to say, “Good, now everybody eat.”

When he returned to his spot, Nian Bing found that he had lost his appetite. Li De suddenly asked him, “Nian Bing, I heard President Ka Luo say that you met on the way here. What were you doing with those people the same age as you.”

Nian Bing answered, “They are my friends, and they are also

warriors.”

Li De looked over Feng Nu. “And is that girl your girlfriend?”

Chapter 57.2 - Long Ling, Reunited

Nian Bing suddenly felt gloomy. Why was it when he was even more inclined to avoid romantic entanglements that new trouble cropped up? “No, she’s just a normal friend. You go ahead and eat; I’ve lost my appetite and will take my leave.” Having said this, he didn’t wait for Li De to say anything more and stood up to go. When he was leaving, Long Ling finally looked at him.

Ka Luo watched Nian Bing leave and wanted to go after him, but after thinking about all the people in the eating hall, he could only helplessly shake his head.

Returning to his room, Nian Bing once again sat on top of his bed. He closed his eyes and resumed meditating. Because he had left the Ice Moon Empire, he wasn’t overly worried about meditating while holding the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Sigh and the Flame God’s Roar in either hand. Quickly, the ice and fire magic elements in the room began to converge around him.

Magic power couldn’t be increased by any sort of trick. Only through continuous cultivation could magic power become more vast, increasing overall strength. The stronger his magic power became, he would be able to produce a greater effect on the environment when casting a spell. This was the reason for the large disparities between ranks of mages.

From his recent extensive research in magic and Magic Scholar Hei Ye’s guidance, Nian Bing had changed meditation methods. Unlike before, where he used every single part of his body to intake magic element, he now completely absorbed the magic element in

the atmosphere using his two devastatingly treasured knives. The Ice and Snow Goddess' Stone and Flame God's Stone acted as filters, amplifying the magic element he then absorbed through his palms.

This was beneficial, firstly because using the two top-grade treasure stones as filters reduced the instability of the magic element very well. Secondly, the magic gathered through the stones was much purer and concentrated. This saved Nian Bing from having to manipulate the magic in his body some. Thirdly, by absorbing magic through two points, when the elements entered his Ice and Fire Source Whirlpool, they would be more balanced, especially since the whirlpool spun faster when meditating.

After switching to this meditation method, Nian Bing clearly felt that his magic was advancing at a much faster rate. One night now was like four or five days of cultivation before. He firmly believed that if he continued like this, he would definitely be able to break into the magic scholar realm soon. Whenever his two magic elements started to swell would also be the time when he needed to seek a breakthrough.

He didn't know how much time had passed when Nian Bing suddenly heard a knock on his door. His spirit power immediately prevented himself from absorbing any more magic from the outside world, and he woke up.

"Who is it?" Right now it was late in the night. The haze of night could be seen outside of the window. Nian Bing stood up, first pulling open the window curtains and then walking to the door.

“Hurry and open up. It’s me,” The beautiful voice came from outside. Nian Bing’s heart thudded. Feng Nu had actually come.

Opening the door, he saw Feng Nu standing at the door adorably, smiling as she looked at him.

“Why are you here so late?” Nian Bing asked in surprise.

Feng Nu smiled and replied, “What is this, you’re not going to invite me in?”

Nian Bing smiled bitterly. “No need for that. It’s so late. What would a young lady like you be doing in my room?”

Feng Nu snorted. “A wise man doesn’t believe in rumors. I am not scared, so what are you scared of?” She pushed Nian Bing aside and walked into his room.

Nian Bing could only close the door. He watched Feng Nu deposit a small cloth bag onto the table. “Eat this. You didn’t eat anything tonight. Are you angry? What did that old mage say to you?”

Nian Bing opened the cloth bag which was piled with snacks. He couldn’t help but feel a rush of warmth in his heart. He walked over to Feng Nu, and full of emotions, drew her into a hug. “Thank you, Feng Nu.”

In a flash, Feng Nu had escaped to her sight, her pretty face red. “Don’t you dare move. Just eat it.”

Nian Bing somewhat awkwardly took out the items and put it on the table. Feng Nu sat down on a chair to the side, looking at Nian Bing with interest.

While eating the snacks, Nian Bing asked, “Feng Nu, don’t you want to ask what sort of relationship Ling’er and I have?”

Feng Nu smiled and shook her head. “That is your private business. If you wanted to tell me you would. Otherwise, I know there’s no use in asking.”

Nian Bing sighed lightly. “Actually, it’s not a big deal to tell you. I met Ling’er after I met you...” He recounted the tale of his and Long Ling’s first encounter, as well as how he had ended up joining the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association. When he was finished, he had finished eating all of the snacks Feng Nu had brought him.

“That said, you have a lot of beauties, huh. That Miss Ling’er is very beautiful. Why don’t you consider her?” Feng Nu was still smiling.

Displeased, Nian Bing said, “I’m also very handsome; are you going to consider me?”

Feng Nu blushed. “That’s impossible. We’re from two different worlds.”

Nian Bing sighed. “Actually, I refused two girls. They were both

outstanding and could have become my wife. I am indeed very fortunate. However, I can't! I must succeed in my revenge. And my enemy is very strong. I also must fulfill my master's wishes. I can't decide on things so quickly, so I could only refuse them. I don't want to implicate them. Before I achieve revenge, romance is a luxury."

Feng Nu nodded and said, "I understand. You're probably right, because I'm the same as you. I do not have the right to talk about matters of the heart. However, girls are the most sensitive to emotions like these. Since starting anything with you would be hopeless, don't lead other people on so you can avoid more mistakes from appearing. You know, you're most attractive when you're fully focused on cooking."

Nian Bing teased, "So you are attracted to me?"

Feng Nu said ill-temperedly, "Attracted my ass. You still owe me. You should compensate me with clothes."

Nian Bing's eyes twinkled. "Okay, I'll pay you, but I don't have any money. How about this? I will make you delicious food your whole life."

Feng Nu snorted. "Then you can just be my servant. I just reminded you not to tease girls, and then you just did it."

Nian Bing laughed. "That is because I know that you will not be fooled! It's late. You should go back and rest. If not, I may have my wicked way with you. With a beauty in front of me, not even my

willpower is that strong.”

Feng Nu’s lips curled into a provocative smile. “Aren’t you afraid that I will smash out all of your teeth? Don’t forget, you aren’t strong enough to overpower me.”

Nian Bing’s eyes flashed. “Don’t forget that I am a mage. My total body strength may be inferior to yours, but if I get the chance, I’m seventy percent certain that I can stop you.”

Feng Nu was stunned for an instant, then said, “I would like to try it then.” Nian Bing was confident that she would be interested. After all, qi was one of the best tools for combatting magic. She knew clearly that Nian Bing’s magic power could not compare to her own Nine Flames Qi, but he spoke so confidently that Feng Nu couldn’t help but have doubts. She did not have a very deep understandings of magic, but her thirst for strength was no less than Nian Bing’s.

Nian Bing smiled strangely. “Do you really want to try it? If I do manage to immobilize you, I can’t guarantee that I won’t do something out of line.”

Feng Nu responded confidently, “I don’t believe it. Let’s make a bet.”

Nian Bing was equally confident. “Okay. I’ll accept whatever you wager.”

Feng Nu thought over it, then replied, “I will let you show off one spell and I won’t even interrupt it. If your spell can immobilize me, then I will write off what happened yesterday. If not, you’ll have to agree to three of my conditions.”

Nian Bing smiled. “Your scheme is pretty good, but if we do it like this you hold too much of an advantage. If I succeed, you have to give me the kiss you owe me from before. If I lose, then I’ll agree to your three conditions.”

Feng Nu looked at him in surprise. “You’re really that certain? You really want to bet?”

Nian Bing grinned. “It’s nothing to me to agree to your three conditions. What is it, you having regrets?”

A light flashed in Feng Nu’s eyes. “Fine. I will bet with you. Where are we doing this?”

Nian Bing pointed at the ground. “My room is fine. Allow me to display my magic. You can sit down first; I have to prepare. Just relax, I will definitely remind you before I cast my magic.”

Feng Nu nodded and went off to the side. However, her gaze was locked on to Nian Bing, waiting for his move.

Nian Bing thought it over, then chanted quickly. A snowstorm appearance next to him. Using his shocking magic control, he maneuvered the snowstorm into an extremely small area. It rose

into the air. He waved his hands, and the Morning Dew Knife and the True Sun Knife appeared in either hand. Under the influence of magic power, the whole room filled with red and blue light. Without hesitating, Nian Bing moved his hands in concert, the two knives transforming into balls of light. He started to drag them across the ground.

“A magic array? You’re making a magic array?” Feng Nu looked at Nian Bing with shock, her former certainty declining.

Nian Bing didn’t respond. His attention was completely on the pair of knives. The knives flashed creating one red and one blue triangle on the ground, forming a six-pointed star. The crossing of red blue gave off powerful magic fluctuations. Nian Bing didn’t stop there. He drew two circles in the hexagram, then quickly drew a complicated symbol in the center. His motions were quick, but he didn’t slip-up at all. One by one, he drew more and more symbols, intensifying the aura of the magic array. The strange thing was, even though the magic aura was intense, it was limited only within the array. Feng Nu, who was outside the array, could sense that the magic array wasn’t normal, but she had no way of gauging it’s true strength. Her heart squeezed as she quietly circulated her Nine Flames Qi, keeping herself in peak condition.

It took longer than he had imagined. Sweat dripped down Nian Bing forward, but it quickly evaporated from the red aura of the magic array. Nian Bing’s face had turned pale, and the light given off by the divine blades wasn’t as strong as it had been initially. Obviously, the construction of this magic array consumed much of his energy.

Suddenly, Nian Bing muttered some lines of chants and light poured out of his eyes. His weakened magic abruptly increased, and his two knives also flashed several times in a row. A halo rose up from the magic array, and in the next moment, the light had disappeared. The markings from the knives were clearly visible.

Nian Bing gulped for air. Putting away his knives, he sat on the bed. Although he looked extremely tired, he was obviously extremely excited. His eyes glittered, and he seemed to be more excited than when he completed the carving of the Ultimate Cauldron of Nine Dragons. “This is was actually possible. This is too wonderful, too amazing.”

Feng Nu asked suspiciously, “Nian Bing, what did you do? Didn’t you say you were going to immobilize me? What kind of magic array did you draw?”

Nian Bing chuckled. “You just try and see it. To use this magic array, all you have to do is walk into the center. If nothing happens it will be my loss.”

Feng Nu skeptically stood up and breathed in deeply. Immediately, a layer of faint red light covered her person. Her gaze roamed around. She wanted to discern something from Nian Bing’s expression, but Nian Bing simply smiled without any hidden indications.

Feng Nu glided forward. Although she was very curious about this magic array, she didn’t really believe that it could trap her. However, she wasn’t going to be careless. She raised her output of qi to eighty percent and settled onto the array.

Suddenly, a powerful sucking force erupted from the ground. Feng Nu jumped in fright, urging her qi to her feet in order to break free from the magic array's hold. However, just as she was moving it, she was shocked to discover that her qi seemed to have found a giant sinkhole and was rushing away beneath her feet.

The magic array on the ground glowed, red light being dominated. In an instant, it encircled Feng Nu, the strangely powerful sucking force continuing to erode her. Her qi disappeared faster and faster because of that strange sucking force.

Feng Nu was frightened. Although she had a great amount of courage, she couldn't help but feel afraid. After all, she had bitterly cultivated her Nine Heavens Qi since she was young. With her seniors help, she had come to where she was today. But presently, her qi seemed to have completely disappeared. Was all of her years spent cultivating in vain? When she thought this, Feng Nu couldn't help but be troubled. She tried to push her qi into the saint qi realm to shake off this strange magic array, but her qi had been exhausted too much. More pushing would only increase the absorption rate. The red, blue light rays resembled a bottomless abyss, swallowing everything.

"Nian Bing, what did you make, quickly let go of me, my qi will..." She was overcome with weakness because of her qi being depleted. Feng Nu looked at him with such pleading. She believed that Nian Bing wouldn't hurt her, but everything before her was beyond the scope of her imagination.

Nian Bing smiled. "That is to say, you admit defeat?"

Feng Nu opened her mouth and was about to say anything when her last shred of qi was extracted. Her whole body went limp, and she immediately fell on the ground.

Nian Bing chuckled and walked inside the array. Even Feng Nu, who was close to the Martial Saint realm, couldn't contend against this ray, but it didn't hurt him at all. He picked up Feng Nu and let her rest against his shoulder. "You should know now that magic is an extremely strange ability. Although my magic is not stronger than your martial arts, in special circumstances I can suppress you completely. This magic array is a special one handed down from ancient times. I just wanted to try it; I didn't think that it would be truly successful."

Tears began to stream down Feng Nu's face. She said sluggishly, "M-my qi, my qi."

Nian Bing smiled. "Silly girl, I will return your qi. However, I want to claim my prize. If I wait for you to recover, I'll have no way of contending with you." While he said this, he embraced Feng Nu's flexible body tightly and brought his face near.

Feng Nu heard Nian Bing say that her qi recovered and immediately was relieved. However, her attention didn't recover fast enough. A manly musk grew closer to her. At the moment, she was so weak she couldn't even move a finger, much less resist. Her pretty face immediately flushed red in embarrassment and she shut her eyes, waiting for the coming lips.

For a long time, the manly musk remained concentrated near her, but the kiss she imagined hadn't come. She cracked open her eyes and was surprised to discover Nian Bing right in front of her face. His face was only three inches away from hers; she could smell his breath.

Nian Bing seemed to shake his head in distress. "Never mind, if you won't voluntarily kiss me, how could I force you?" He muttered a few lines of chant, and the magic array immediately transformed. Dense red light seemed to pour into Feng Nu's body like rivers running to the sea. Feng Nu felt her whole body shake as her familiar returned to every nook and cranny of her body. As she gained in strength, she trembled in excitement. The feeling of her qi recovering was too wonderful.

Chapter 58.1 - The Tian Dang Mountains

Feng Nu's qi recovered much faster than she lost it. But even when she recovered to her optimum state, she seemed to forget how to use her martial saint strength and remained in Nian Bing's embrace, weak as a kitten.

Nian Bing carried Feng Nu out of the magic array. "Are my arms so warm?"

A flash of red, and Feng Nu escaped Nian Bing's embrace. Slightly peeved, she said, "You only know how to take advantage of me."

Nian Bing chuckled. "I won just now. Aren't you going to give me a kiss?"

Feng Nu looked at Nian Bing strangely. "Then why didn't you kiss me? Since you didn't seize the opportunity, then it will be taken as you giving it up. Nian Bing, what kind of magic array is this? I didn't even have the chance to resist."

Nian Bing looked at the complicated patterns on the ground. "This is a very special magic array that came from ancient times. I first saw it in the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association library. I thought that it was impossible to construct since it was way too complicated. It's useless once you make a single mistake, and there are several spots that contradict each other. The magic symbols also intersect one another, posing no small problem. However, I realized that I would never be able to make it if I used only one hand. But if I used my hands simultaneously I could do it. So I

thought about using the Ice and Fire Source as a base. I've gone over this countless times in theory, but this was this first time I have ever drawn it. I didn't think that I would succeed so easily." He paused here, a bit absent-minded as he looked at the array. "Feng Nu, do you know what this ancient magic array is called? It's called the magical space. After creating this space, I became its ruler. I can switch between two states, the release state and the absorption state."

Feng Nu did not really understand. "Can you explain clearly what is 'release' and what is 'absorb'?"

Nian Bing's eyes sparkled intelligently. "It's very simple. This magic array was used in an ancient era as a seal. Because it so extremely difficult to draw, very few people could use it. Once the array is complete it can absorb all of the outside magic element into itself, and all of the energy it has absorbed is under my control. To put it simply, if I were to use the release spell while in the array, my magical strength would be boosted by at least thirty percent. If other people step into the magic array, which is what you did, it can completely swallow all of your energy. However, the possibility of that actually happening is small because you can sense the aura the magic array gives off. If we weren't betting, would you have so easily stepped in it? So this array is more for boosting my own magic."

Feng Nu was still doubtful. "I still don't understand. I cultivate qi, not magic. How come it could absorb my qi and then release it?"

Nian Bing grinned. "All forms of energy in the world are

conserved. Magic and qi are different types of energy, but the end, they are just that. Energy. For instance, my fire magic and your Nine Flames Qi both have the fire attribute. And my magic array was founded on both ice and fire, so it produced the maximum effect against you. After it absorbed your qi, you didn't truly lose it. You just suffered the weakening effect of the magic space, making it seem like you lost your qi. Actually, the magic qi only held your qi and cut you off from the outside world, producing the misperception. If you left the magic array, even without my help, you would be able to recover your qi in about an hour."

Feng Nu thought it over. "That is to say, with this magic array, your strength would be raised substantially? Hmph, I was fooled this time, but you won't have the opportunity later."

Nian Bing smiled. "One opportunity is enough for me. You're my friend. If you were an enemy, I might not let them escape so easily. But this magic array also has many disadvantages. Not only does it take a long time to draw, the failure rate is very high. On top of that, it consumes over 90% of my magic, so I can't use it regularly."

Feng Nu laughed. "It really isn't simple. Why don't you dig out a part of the floor of this room and then put into a space storage magic item?"

Nian Bing broke into laughter. "How could it be that easy. The magic array cannot be moved once formed. Otherwise, not only will it lose its original effect, but it also might explode. When I was studying magic arrays, I already thought of it. It's best used to protect cities. As for anything else, it won't be that useful, unless my magic power strengthens enough that it is much easier for me

to draw this array.”

Feng Nu stared at Nian Bing and said, “You used such a broken magic array to take my qi; it makes it hard to accept my loss. However, I won’t act shamelessly.” She flashed forward. Nian Bing only felt a delicate fragrance assail his nostrils as his lips were covered by a soft pressure. Just as he was about to grasp onto this incomparably wonderful feeling, the warmth disappeared. The door opened and Feng Nu left, leaving Nian Bing the only one in the room.

Looking at the door, Nian Bing shook his head and laughed bitterly and shook his head. “Feng Nu, oh Feng Nu, did you know? The more we spend time with each other, the less I can control my impulses.”

Winter dawns were the coldest time of the day. Rousing from his meditation, Nian Bing reveled in his fully recovered magic power, courtesy of the magic array he had drawn last night. Opening the window, cold air bit at his face. His breath turned into faint white smoke, blown away by a chilly wind. It really was so cold! Although he had two kinds of magic on him, this kind of weather was unmatched cold. As a mage, he was not very well adapted to it. Sadly, he didn’t bring a stitch of thicker clothing. After refreshing the room, he shut the window. He put on his coarse, cotton clothing underneath his ice advanced mage robe he got from the association. Feeling the ice element circulating around the robe, he cast an additional ice body spell on himself. Now, he wouldn’t feel the cold.

The mercenaries of the Ice Moon Mercenary Group had already

woke up. Under Ka Luo and the two vice-captain's instructions, they had prepared what they needed. Every person carried a small rucksack as well as the standard warrior's sword. There were over thirty people there, but their breathing scarcely made sound. Especially strange were the four identical, weird items set up in the courtyard. At the center of each contraption was a chair, as both sides were connected by a long and rough bamboo pole. It all looked very queer.

“Nian Bing, you've awakened. I was planning on finishing preparations before calling you. Go have some breakfast. In a moment we will set off.”

Watching Ka Luo's confident smile, Nian Bing gestured to the strange items in the courtyard. “President, what is the purpose of those things.”

Ka Luo grinned. “There were originally only three of them, but you came. I ordered them to make another one. This is specially made for you mages. The Tian Dang Mountains haven't developed; the roads are rugged and hard to pass through. It's much too difficult for you mages. If you used your magic to advance, it would consume all of your magic. So, we specially made these for you. This was invented in the Lang Mu Empire, called a sedan chair. You can sit in it very carefully and rely on us warriors to carry it. Not only will progress be much swifter, it can also conserve your strength.

Nian Bing secretly praised Ka Luo's attentiveness. He said out loud, “President, this is no good! How could we trouble the warriors so?”

Ka Luo smiled. "It's no trouble. When it comes to a critical time, we will be relying on you mages to save us. For us, you four mages are an important lifesaving weapon!"

Two hours later, Nian Bing and the others finally set off. Now, the Ice Moon Mercenary Association numbered thirty-three. Among them were three martial masters and thirty great swordmasters. Coming them was the Zi siblings, Feng Nu, Nian Bing, and three mages. The whole group numbered over forty people.

When they had come that night, Nian Bing hadn't been paying attention the the city. So when he left the inn, Nian Bing took the chance to observe the city. This Tian Dang City was much more pathetic than the bigger cities. He could even see the west wall while standing at the east wall. The whole city didn't have any large stores. It appeared that the majority of residents made their living as hunters.

Once they left the city, he could see the swathe of grey mountains in the distant. However, he couldn't see the peaks; they were covered in a thick cloud. Sitting in the sedans was extremely relaxing. With two great swordmasters carrying them, the sedans were extremely steady with slight rocking motions. Besides the cold, it was hard to think of this as carrying out a mission instead of a pleasure trip. THe whole mercenary team was neat and orderly. Ka Luo leading, the thirty mercenaries keeping the four mages in the middle, and the two vice-captains and the other three lurked in the very rear. It could be said that this was a small-scale troop.

Long Ling sat expressionless in the sedan. She was wearing a thick, white fur coat. Li De and Feng Yun were also wearing thick leather clothing. Among the four mages, it was obvious that Nian Bing was the most miserable. The warriors advanced extremely quickly. Although they weren't really walking. Every step they took covered at least three meters. Even if this wasn't faster than travelling by horseback, it wasn't all that slow. The scenery flew past them and so did the cold wind. Nian Bing's ice body spell could not completely block it out. Although fire magic could warm him up well, it could not be maintained for long. Helpless, he could only cast ice body spells one after the other and hug the True Sun Knife for warmth. This was a bit better, but he still regretted not buying thicker wear.

Under the silent advance of the warriors, they finally arrived at Tian Dang Mountain in two hours. The mountain in winter was barren, and other than the chirping of the birds that one could hear from time to time, the entire mountain felt desolate. Not long after stepping into the mountain, Ka Luo stopped by a cave where the wind couldn't reach. "Everyone, we'll rest for a moment before proceeding. The ones responsible for the sedan chairs will change shifts. Do not forget to stay on guard."

The sedans were set on the ground; Nian Bing and the others got off. The warriors split up to guard all the important locations. Ka Luo walked over to Li De, took out what seemed to be a map from his chest area and began discussing it with Li De. Nian Bing felt very relaxed. He took out a large pot from his space ring and asked Zi Qing Jian to smash a hole in the ground with his qi. He filled the large pot with ice, then used a flame spell to heat up the iron pot. After a moment, the ice turned into warm water. While Nian Bing maintained the spell, he called out. "It is very cold outside.

Everybody, come have a drink of hot water before we continue.” Even though they were very hardy people, being able to drink hot water on a winter day was a wonderful thing.

When the water came to a boil, Feng Yun came over to Nian Bing and took out a pile of bowls from his magic space item. “Nian Bing, I’ll help you. Your magic is very wonderful!”

Feng Yun was an earth mage, most specialized in defense. Nian Bing nodded, taking out a ladle from his space ring. He filled every bowl, then called everyone else over.

Ka Luo’s laugh rang out. “Nian Bing, you truly are a great member for logistics! Drinking hot water on such a cold day is very nice. Come, I have some tea leaves here. Boil them and let everyone have a taste.”

“No, we can’t use those tea leaves.” Nian Bing stopped Ka Luo. “Plain water is the most nutritious for people. Tea is good, but it speeds up people’s metabolism so it easier for them to be hungry and overly excited. So water is fine for now. Save your tea leaves as seasoning. I can use them when I make food.”

Everyone drank the hot water. These mercenaries already saw Nian Bing as one of their own. Every person was glad to accept this kind of mage. After all, Nian Bing had already bought their stomachs.

After drinking some water, Nian Bing felt much more comfortable. Suddenly, Nian Bing felt a chill go down his spine. He

subconsciously looked to his left. At the same time, two other people copied his movement. One was Feng Nu and the other was the bucket-shaped Hua Rui.

Hua Rui bellowed like a broken gong and displayed speed incongruous of her stature. She shot out like a giant meatball, covering his vision like a small hill.

Ka Luo also responded quickly. He shouted, “Protect the mages!” A red figure flashed. The first to come to Nian Bing’s side was Feng Nu.

Chapter 58.2 - The Tian Dang Mountains

Nian Bing exchanged glances with Feng Nu and asked in a low voice, “Did you feel it?”

Feng Nu nodded. “We really might’ve struck the hot plate this time. That aura is very familiar to me; it is quite possible that this is the special clan I spoke of to you.” Previously, Nian Bing and Feng Nu had both sensed something. Nian Bing could not sense it on his own, but because the True Sun Knife suddenly heated up, he felt the unstable fluctuations in his own magic power.

Very soon, Hua Rui’s figure flew back. The makeup on her face had been sloughed off due to her high speed. To Ka Luo, she said, “I didn’t see anyone.”

Ka Luo frowned. “You didn’t see? Could you tell if it was human or beast?”

Hua Rui shook her head and said, “It is hard to say. However, could a human be so fast? I am quite quick myself, and if I didn’t see them, they must be a martial saint. But there are only several martial saints on this continent. Why would they come to this place where birds don’t even shit? It’s more likely to be a magic beast that specializes in speed. It is normal for mountains like these to have magic beasts. If we are careful there shouldn’t be a problem. Ka Luo, we must move as fast as possible and cut down at time, lest something happen.”

Ka Luo nodded. “We’re heading out. Everybody, prepare your

defenses and pay particular attention to the mages. If you discover any danger, make sure to warn everyone right away.”

They set out again. This time, the atmosphere of the troop was obviously much more keyed up. Unlike the close formation of before, they spread out in order to cover a greater area, to guard against an unknown enemy’s attack

They walked from dawn to noon and had entered the deeper parts of the Tian Dang mountains. In that time, a similar feeling from before did not occur; it seemed that everything was normal. Nian Bing kept his eyes shut the whole time, extending his spirit to sense the outside world. Surprisingly, this was much more sensitive than using his own eyes. Neither the fluctuations of the air current nor grass movement could escape his spirit’s senses. After hearing what Feng Nu said, he felt that something was just not right. Although the feeling of being observed had disappeared, he still felt that people were watching him from a distance. What was this clan Feng Nu spoke of?

The mountain passage became even more rugged. The four warriors at the front continuously hacked at the brittle brush with their longswords while the sedans, surrounded by mercenaries, continued to make progress behind. Suddenly, Li De shouted. “Everybody, stop!” He began his chant. “Mighty spring! Please let your tears flow unto me and travel the world. Seek the mysterious aura—eyes of eternal rebirth.”

A faint blue light gathered around Li De. The water element the air obviously intensified. Nian Bing, who was familiar with every sort of magic was shocked. This was the rank 8 water spell, eyes of

eternal rebirth!

The blue light continued to glow brighter. Li De raised his small magic wand to the sky which became wrapped in a faint blue light. His body exuded a divine aura and he pointed the magic wand forward. The dense, blue haze suddenly flew into the ground, and the light grew outwards, forming an expanding blue sheet. Li De's nonstop chant created ripples in the blue light like ripples on a spring.

As the blue halo began to extend outwards, everyone at the scene could clearly feel a warm energy touch their bodies. As this energy washed over them, everyone felt that their sense organs had been strengthened.

Nian Bing knew that Li De was certain that he would find something. If not, he would not have wasted so much magic power in this rank 8 water spell. Eyes of eternal rebirth had a very obvious function. Not only could it sharpen the companions senses, it could also sense all life forms within its range. It came from the spring of life. As long as there was water, the eyes of eternal rebirth would not fail.

The blue halo finally disappeared, and Li De shut his eyes and stopped his chanting. Everyone turned to look at him in silent anticipation.

Suddenly, Li De convulsed, falling onto the sedan without any warning. His whole body twitched violently as he began to froth at the mouth. The aura of his life force disappeared of him rapidly.

Nian Bing was very close to Li De and was immediately frightened by what he saw. He hastily jumped out of his sedan over to Li De, pouring pure magic power into Li De. At the same time, his expression turned extremely grave. He had read about what happened to Li De in a book. When a mage sent a probing type spell into their environment and encountered a powerful spiritual attack stronger than themselves, they would immediately be 'counter-devoured'. For Li De, who had the strength of a magic scholar, almost the strength of a magister, it would be rare to have someone strong enough to counter-devour his rank 8 spell. It appeared that not only was there a hidden enemy in this Tian Dang Mountains, but that this enemy far exceeded their expectations.

Long Ling grabbed onto Li De's other hand. Ice and water were of the same origin. She and Nian Bing poured ice element into Li De's body, hoping that they could help him break free of the counter-devour.

With the aid of two great mages, Li De's convulsions gradually stopped. However, he still wasn't awake. Nian Bing hesitated for a moment, then waved his right arm. The Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh appeared in his hand. He placed the Ice and Snow Goddess' stone to the Li De's forehead, in order to channel his ice magic into Li De through the Ice and Snow Goddess' Stone. At the same time, he opened the Holy Light Stone's box and placed on Li De's chest. One to rouse his spirit and one to stabilize it. With the addition of these two exceptional treasure stones, Li De managed to shudder in a breath. He slowly opened his eyes.

"Teacher Li De, how are you feeling? What did you see that counter-devoured you so fiercely?" Nian Bing asked impatiently

while having his own suspicions in his heart.

Long Ling took out a handkerchief from her chest and used it to wipe away the froth at Li De's mouth. "Let Teacher Li De rest first."

Li De shook his head. When he felt Nian Bing's outpour of magic, he managed a smile. "Thankfully you were here. If not, I would not have even know that I died. It was much too frightening. There was this red, a red I could not see clearly, but the red was filled with a matchless domineering aura. I tried to use water to guide my spirit to see its secrets, but I was unable to sense anything. My spiritual power received a powerful shock and it felt like the spell just crumbled."

Nian Bing questioned solemnly, "Where is the place that you searched?"

"It was at the center of the Tian Dang Mountains. I suddenly felt that something was not right. As you know, water and ice are extremely sensitive to fire. On this bitterly cold day, I suddenly felt myself warm. It seemed like someone had manipulated the fire element to surround us. In light of what happened earlier, I decided to explore a wider area. I didn't think that I would be counter-devoured and nearly die."

Nian Bing turned to look at Ka Luo. "President, is the treasure trove on the map located in the center of the mountain range?"

Ka Luo smiled bitterly. "I wished it were not so, but reality is not

so kind. According to the marks on the map, the treasure trove is located on a mountain in the center of the Tian Dang mountains. The mark on the map is a simple cross; I don't know whether it means a cave or some other geographical feature. We will only know after finding the place. With our current speed, it would take about three days before we got there. However, Mage Li De sensed danger, so we must think it over cautiously."

The 'bucket' Hua Rui snorted and said, "What's there to think about? Perhaps Magic Scholar Li De sensed a volcano. Could it be that you are saying that a volcano's energy is not enough to produce such a sensation? We are not like the man of Qi who was afraid of the sky falling. Let's talk about it again after reaching the place. Even if it's dangerous what's there to be scared of. We have so many people. If we can't defeat the danger, can we not run? We have spent so much time and energy for this mission, how could we give up halfway?"

Next to her, Jia Te Lin affirmed her words, "I agree with Hua Rui's reasoning. We cannot so easily give up because of a fright."

Ka Luo said, "I do not mean that we should give up. I just want everyone to be very careful so we can better complete the task. It is already noon; we should all rest and let Magic Scholar Li De recover."

Nian Bing looked at Li De silently. He then asked quietly, "Teacher Li De, could it have been a volcano?"

Li De thought it over. "I have no way of being certain, but it's definitely possible. It was a truly strong fire-attributed energy.

Nian Bing, this operation looks to be much more challenging than we expected. You must promise me one thing. If there is a danger so great we cannot deal with it, you must protect Ling'er no matter what and leave. This is what I promised the president. Right now it looks like my magic will take at least two days to recover. Please, I implore you."

Nian Bing looked at Long Ling, looking as if she had not heard what Li De said. "Teacher Li De, do not worry. Without your reminder, I still would have tried my hardest to protect Ling'er. It's just that my strength is poor, so I might not be able to meet your expectations."

Li De smiled weakly. "In the end, the matters of humans follow the Mandate of Heaven. Ah, if only my spell hadn't been broken. I could get a better feel for the surroundings. Right now, we can only barge away through. I really hope that what I found was just a volcano."

Nian Bing saw from Li De's eyes that he also knew that this could not be a volcano. How could he make such an amateur mistake? The eyes of eternal birth were water based. Could there be water in a volcano? If it really was a volcano, Li De would not be able to see it.

Feng Nu had appeared to Nian Bing at sometime. Quietly, she asked, "Are you really continuing forward?"

Nian Bing replied, "Right now, I do not have any reason to go back. But it seems things are exactly as you said. Feng Nu, can you really not tell me more about this clan?"

Feng Nu hesitated for a moment but ultimately shook her head. “Perhaps things aren’t as serious as we thought. As long as we do not encroach on that clan’s interests, we will not illicit confrontation. That clan does not have interest in gold or precious items. I think that the treasure trove you seek is unrelated to them, so we don’t need to worry, necessarily.”

When he heard Feng Nu’s words, Nian Bing relaxed slightly. “I do hope that’s the case.”

Not saying anymore, Nian Bing walked over to the side. He elicited the help of two mercenaries to set up a stove and Feng Yun to take out the food from his space item, then began making the meal.

After all, he had to make over thirty people’s worth of food. Nian Bing chose the simplest of cooking techniques. He soaked the clean rice in water while shredding the chicken then throwing it into the pot. He then added some jujubes, then sprinkled in some salt and then stirred evenly. He then began to cook. There were so many people, and they were in the middle of a subversive crisis, so he did not care about showing off his culinary skills. His first priority was replenishing everybody’s strength; stuffing their stomachs was the most important. This shredded chicken jujube rice was not up to his standards, but it was extremely effective at replenishing strength. While cooking it, Nian Bing directly put the True Sun Knife into the pot and, along with his fire magic, quickly made everyone a meal that was not overly rich but still tasty.

After eating, all the mercenaries had recovered well. Ka Luo did

not allow everyone more time to rest and quickly took to the road. The goal was still in the deepest part of the Tian Dang Mountains.

When they set out this time, Li De became the most important one to protect and was placed at the very center of all the mercenaries. He had eaten a few simple foods at lunch and was already meditating in the sedan, working hard to recover all of his strength.

The wintry mountains were not completely bare. Some cold-resistant vegetation still grew. The mercenary group followed the natural cavities in the mountain in order to save their strength. When the skies grew dark, they had passed through several mountains. Their nervous pace had brought them far, but naturally, the mountain road limited their speed. They were still two days away from their goal.

At night, Ka Luo chose a level depression in the mountain to camp. They set up all the tents. After a simple dinner, Ka Luo brought Nian Bing and the two vice-captains into his tent. As Li De had consumed a large quantity of his magic power, now Nian Bing was the most important mage in Ka Luo's eyes.

The four people sat in a circle. Ka Luo unfolded a dilapidated map. This was the first Nian Bing saw the map to the treasure trove. It was made of leather yellowed by dirt. The markings were drawn on in red. The picture clearly depicted the Tian Dang mountains because the only marking in the left hand corner was Tian Dang City. It was marked very clearly, which made it easy to orient the map.

Chapter 59.1 - A Mysterious Enemy

Although the treasure trove map was weathered by the years, the Tian Dang Mountains were depicted very clearly. Hundreds of mountain peaks were drawn in detail. The red cross that Ka Luo spoke of was right in the center, at the base of a tall mountain.

Ka Luo pointed at the map. “We are here right now. Although we did not encounter any obstacles today, we did sense something. The operation might not go smoothly.”

Jia Te Lin nodded. “It is too silent. Silence is frightening. Even if it is winter, there shouldn’t be zero animals on the mountain. However, we have yet to encounter one. It seems like there’s something imperceptible here controlling these mountains.”

Ka Luo nodded. “What worries most is that Magic Scholar Li De’s spell was counter-devoured.”

Hua Rui said, “That’s right! It definitely is not a volcano, but I could not say so then.”

Nian Bing’s heart jumped. His perception of Hua Rui immediately changed. This shocking-looking vice-captain was not as simple as she appeared. She had known all along it wasn’t a volcano, but she hadn’t said as much in order to calm the rest of the team.

Ka Luo turned to Nian Bing. “Nian Bing, do you have any opinions?”

Nian Bing thought it over. “I have only one: immediately turn back and give up this mission.”

Jia Te Lin snorted coldly. “You scared?”

Nian Bing smiled thinly. “Scared? If being scared can save my life then what’s the harm in being scared? I refuse to let myself to fall into inescapable danger just because we are barreling forward. If I could choose, I think that it is best we abandon this mission, because that unknown danger might not be something we can contend with.”

Jia Te Lin argued, “Boy, do you know how much we spent for this operation? We paid over 10,000 gold coins to your mage association alone. And there are a lot of other expenses! We have already invested three months worth of the association’s income. How could we just give up?”

Nian Bing refused to return Jia Te Lin’s gaze. “I have a reason. As long as there are green mountains, there will be wood to burn. Of course, I understand what you are thinking right now. Without running into a true obstacle, you might not give up. Since I promised President Ka Luo that I would join your operation, I will definitely travel with you. However, if things come to pass as I have said, if we meet an undefeatable enemy, I will not hesitate to run away. At that time, you cannot blame me.”

“You...” Jia Te Lin leaped to his feet, filled with imposing might. He released his martial master qi, the light in his eyes flashing. He

looked like he was thinking over whether to dispose of Nian Bing or not.

Hua Rui hehe'd and leaned close to Nian Bing. "Little brother, it looks like you have seen something. Why are you so sure that we cannot triumph over this mission?"

Nian Bing harrumphed coldly. "I did not discover an enemy, but could it be you didn't feel that it got warmer the closer we got to the center of the mountains? The changes have not been too overt, but we are in the midst of a severe winter; it seems much too warm here for that."

His words woke them. Jia Te Lin sat back down, his expression focused and then exchanged looks of dismay with Ka Luo. They really had not noticed this issue, but now that Nian Bing mentioned, they felt it true.

Ka Luo took a deep breath. "Nian Bing, what you say is reasonable. However, before we began the mission, we already accepted a portion the employer's commission. If we go back now, according to the rules we must pay it back in threefold. Though the association is able to repay this amount, the losses would be too great, especially in terms of our reputation. So we need to at least try. Do not worry, if we meet any danger, we will definitely make protecting the mages our top priority. IF you agree, I will let you and your friends leave first if we definitely cannot stop the danger. How is that?"

Nian Bing smiled. "Since President has decided so, I will not say anything more. We must be extremely careful. As for my friends,

you do not need to worry too much about them. They will not have problems unless the enemy totally annihilates us.”

“Aaaahhh–” came a ear piercing shriek from outside. The expressions of the people in the tent all changed at once. With a flash of light, Ka Luo and the two vice-captains charged out of the tent. Nian Bing was already gripping two magic scrolls.

“What happened?” Ka Luo asked seriously, his eyes searching the camp illuminated by torches. All of the mercenaries were nervous, each of them having drawn out their longsword and anxiously surveying the pitch-black darkness around them.

Long Ling and Feng Nu had made their way out of their tent. Long Ling’s gaze swept over the crowd. When she saw Nian Bing, she breathed an obvious sigh of relief, but immediately reverted to her chilly demeanor.

Nian Bing’s eyes roamed around the camp. He muttered a few lines of chant and produced an exploding flame in the air. The light of the fire penetrated the darkness, immediately brightening up the area. Because of the sudden light, a black shadow in the trees flitted away to a distant location lightning fast. Hua Rui bellowed in anger, her massive frame slamming into and breaking a sapling. Brandishing her battle axes which resembled carriage wheels, she chased after the black shadow, light as a swallow. Jia Te Lin had obviously been with Hua Rui for many years. In a remarkable display of silent understanding, he went in the direction the black shadow had first come from, where the scream was first heard.

Nian Bing did not care about those things. After using the exploding flame spell, he immediately ran over to Feng Nu, saying a few things in her ear quietly. Feng Nu frowned, but nodded slowly. This all happened in front of Long Ling; her aloof expression showed signs of distress.

After some time, Hua Rui and Jia Te Lin returned. Hua Rui's enormous axes were streaked with blood, and Jia Te Lin was carrying a person. It was one of the mercenaries; he no longer had the aura of life about him. His neck was twisted at a strange angle. Obviously, he had died from a snapped neck.

The atmosphere around the mercenary troop had changed completely. Jia Te Lin said coldly, "There were no signs of a struggle; he must've been taken by a sneak attack. The assault was extremely violent and directly snapped his neck. Can anyone tell me why he went into the forest alone?"

One of the mercenaries said quietly, "He went to relieve himself. Just as he entered the forest, we all heard the scream."

Ka Luo's expression was positively chilling. He turned to Hua Rui. "What did you discover on your end?"

Hua Rui reported, "It is a human; I was able to tell from their body type. He and I did not clash, but he was astonishingly fast. I had to use all of my strength as well as the plundering shadows skill and still barely managed to keep up with him. He probably didn't think that my speed would suddenly increase, and in that moment of carelessness, I managed one stroke of the axe to his back. However, that person seemed to be wearing some kind of

armor. His back was extremely hard, like mail plating, but it seemed even firmer than mail plating. My axe landed, but it was only at sixty percent strength and I could only scratch him. After I used plundering shadows, my speed dropped drastically temporarily, so I did not pursue him. However, I saw that the person seemed to have red eyes; it was quite monstrous. Luckily Nian Bing used that fireball. If not, we would not have been able to catch that shadow in the darkness.”

Nian Bing said, “That person must’ve have been scared by my fireball and chose to run immediately. From now on, no matter what you’re doing, at least three people must be together. This way, at least you’ll be able to defend the attack and give us a chance to save you.”

“Watch out,” said Feng Nu suddenly. Without hesitation, Nian Bing immediately broke open the scroll in his hands. A rank 4 ice wall spell appeared around him. A great force rammed into him and Nian Bing’s body moved forward on its own. The Ice and Snow Goddess’s Sigh and the Flame God’s Roar leaped into his hands. Without turning to look, using only his spirit to determine the opponent’s location, he sent a fireball and ice ball out at the same time.

With a large bang, the instantly cast ice and fire magic exploded with a high-ranking fighter’s body. At the same time, the opponent showed his strength.. A cry of alarm came from mid-air. Hua Rui and Jia Te Lin were already charging there; two broad axes and a cold sword were headed straight at the figure who had attacked Nian Bing.

Fiery red light suddenly flashed as a scorching stream of air pervaded the space. With a large sound, Hua Rui and Jia Te Lin were repelled in the air. The attacking black figure shot back into the air and rasped, “This will be your only warning. Immediately leave this place, otherwise your corpses will be buried here in the Tian Dang Mountains and become fertilizer.” The voice then faded away with the figure. When Jia Te Lin and Hua Rui had fallen to the ground, the black shadow had already vanished without a trace.

Ka Luo brandished his longsword and was standing next to Nian Bing. He asked in concern, “Are you all right?”

Nian Bing looked back at the pile of ice powder with lingering trepidation. He truly doubted, if Feng Nu had not suddenly warned him, whether or not his trigger magic scrolls could save his life. The rank 4 ice wall spell was the strongest spell out of all defensive rank 4 spells, but it was only able to stop a little bit of the enemy’s attack. From Ka Luo’s movement, the one to truly save him was not that spell, but Ka Luo.

He shook his head. “I am fine. Thank you very much for saving me, President.”

Ka Luo smiled bitterly. “It seems what you said had reason. From when I exchanged blows with that person, it was very obvious that his strength was not any less than mine. From what we have seen, we have at least two martial master ranked enemies.”

Nian Bing sighed. “But I understand, that this will not sway your conviction. Am I right?”

Ka Luo nodded firmly. “Knowing the difficulties yet rising above has always been the principle I live by.”

A sudden laugh broke out behind them. Nian Bing turned to look, only to see that the one laughing was Zi Qing Meng. “You two seemed to have switch ages. The young one is a cautious old man and the elder one is a stubborn young man.”

Ka Luo sighed. “Continue with the watch. Everyone else go back to sleep in the tents. What Nian Bing said before is now my order. Anything must be done with at least three people.”

Everything returned to silence. Nian Bing went back to his own tent this time, thinking about the powerful attack from before. He couldn't help the fear creeping into his heart. Who was the enemy, after all? If it is at Feng Nu said, it is some kind of clan. That said, what kind of clan could live in these mountains. And they seemed capable of human speech as well as a human shape, so they should be humans! How are they some other clan?

He breathed in deeply. The enemy suddenly attacking from a hidden location only made Nian Bing feel the situation was even more dangerous. As a mage in the mercenary group, he was the easiest target for the opponent. He needed to raise his vigilance and defense. If not, if he were to die mysteriously in these mountains, it would be a total waste.

The enemy's surprise attack set the entire group jumping at the sighing of the wind and the cry of the crane. However, after

midnight there were no obvious changes. Under the illumination of the sun on the Tian Dang mountains, a new day had begun. Nian Bing turned the mercenary who had died into ashes. The mercenaries companions would bring back his bone ash to bury in the Ice Moon Empire.

Gazing at the continuous chain of ridges, Ka Luo raised a hand in the air and shouted one word. "Forward!" It seemed like the attack from last night had all but disappeared; he was full of confidence. However, Nian Bing observed that Ka Luo's other hand never left the sword hanging at his waist.

The atmosphere of the second day was much more nervous than then first. Everytime they noticed some activity or sound next to them, they were frightened as if the enemy was already leaping out and snapping their necks. It was not strange that they were this nervous. After all, the death of their companion had cast a shadow over the troop. Fortunately, Ka Luo and the two vice-captains were extremely unyielding and their subordinates had undergone long years of training. If you looked at them, besides being a lot more cautious than before, they did not seem to very affected.

The strange thing was that the enemy had warned them yesterday, but on the second day they did not appear before the mercenary group. Nian Bing even felt that the people watching him from afar had disappeared. So a day's worth of travel with smoothly. Despite this, when they camped for the night, Ka Luo made sure to personally inspect every single tent, then went to the mercenaries in charge of patrol to tell them what to watch over. Each of the vice-captains also took either the before midnight or after midnight shift.

He patted his stomach. The things that he made were still the most delicious. Nian Bing reclined in his tent, relaxed. The cushion he had brought with him in his space ring made his time right now most enjoyable. For two days, the food had been all his responsibilities. Every time they ate was the time that the mercenaries could completely relax. Because of this, the mercenaries favorable impression of Nian Bing increased. When they were on the road, they would specially stick close to him, so as to prevent another sneak attack from occurring. And after two days, Li De's magic had also recovered to about seventy-eighty percent. He was no longer super weak, but he still did not dare probe into what was at the center of the Tian Dang Mountains.

Chapter 59.2 - A Mysterious Enemy

“Nian Bing, can I come in?” Feng Nu asked from outside the tent.

The tents the mercenaries used weren't big; there was only one space for one person to lie down. When he heard Feng Nu's voice, Nian Bing immediately sat up. “Please, come in.”

The flap of the tent was pulled back, and Feng Nu stepped in and took a seat. Her pink hair spread like a shawl over her shoulders, framing her devastatingly beautiful face. A desire to embrace her perfect form rose up in his heart, flushing him with warmth. “Feng Nu, why are you looking for me?”

Feng Nu's expression betrayed her anxiety. “Nian Bing, things are far from well!”

Nian Bing smiled coolly. “Then you should tell me now what exactly this clan is.”

Feng Nu sighed. “Sorry, I cannot violate the agreement my predecessors. I'm afraid now that we are here, we can only go forward. I didn't get a clear look at other person from last night, but I saw the appearance of the person who attacked you. It was exactly as I had thought; it was a member of that clan. Do you know why they didn't reappear today? It's not because they let us go; they still intend to kill you. Once we truly enter into the inner mountains, they will strike.”

Nian Bing's brows creased slightly. “That is to say, this is the

calm before the storm. Our path won't go so smoothly tomorrow."

Feng Nu nodded. "Yes, that is so."

Nian Bing said, "Unfortunately, I'm unable to persuade President Ka Luo. Without any solid proof they won't give up. I'm afraid I must trouble you with what I said to you last night."

Feng Nu nodded. "I can only try my best. After all, plans cannot keep up with change."

Nian Bing suddenly laughed lightly. "You smell very good! You haven't bathed for at least two days; how can you smell so good."

Feng Nu was first stunned, then her pretty face reddened. "You're always in the mood to joke, without heed for the occasion."

Nian Bing smiled. "The more nerve-wracking it is the more we must relax so we can better face what's ahead, no? And you still haven't answered my question."

Feng Nu snorted. "My kinsmen and I have the ability to clean our bodies. Even if we haven't washed in months and our clothes are all dirt, our bodies definitely won't be. Enough of this. I only came to remind you to be careful, not to abandon the quest. As soon as things turn bad, you must run as fast as you can." She stood up and rolled her eyes at Nian Bing before leaving.

Even after she left, the fragrance still lingered. Nian Bing inhaled deeply. His infatuation with Feng Nu had increased. From his space pouch he took out the unused, little flute Feng Nu had given him. A warmth suffused through his heart. Although ‘friendship’ forever separated them, he could still feel Feng Nu’s sincere concern.

Again, the tent curtains suddenly lifted and a slender figure slipped in. Nian Bing thought Feng Nu returned, but when looked up he found it was actually the icy Zi Qing Meng.

“Miss Zi? What business do you have with me?” Nian Bing asked in surprise.

Zi Qing Meng saw the flute Nian Bing was holding, then sat herself down in front of him without any politeness. “There are two things. First, about my brother, and second, about when we reach the treasure trove tomorrow.”

Nian Bing’s interest was piqued. “In specific?”

Zi Qing Meng answered. “I see that your relationship with Feng Nu isn’t ordinary, and that is your private matter; I have no right to interfere. But as you surely know, ever since Feng Nu appeared, my big brother hasn’t been able to extricate himself from his infatuation. If Feng Nu is your girlfriend, I hope that you can officially tell him and save him from his delusions. I really don’t want him to suffer the pain of unrequited love.”

Nian Bing smiled lightly. “I’m afraid I can’t help you with this

task. It's not because I don't want to, but because I don't have the right to. Feng Nu and I remain only friends, so how could I say she's my girlfriend?"

Zi Qing Meng snorted. "You're only friends? You lying bastard. Do you think I didn't see you two hugging so tightly? If you were only friends would she let you do such a thing so easily? If you were only friends, would she let you lean against her shoulder and sleep?"

Nian Bing's heart jumped. What Zi Qing Meng said was true. When he thought of that day, it was sort of accidental on his part, to be honest. He never imagined that Feng Nu would actually indulge him so. Could it be really has feelings for him? "Miss Zi, we have temporarily set aside this matter. Tomorrow, we are to arrive at the treasure trove site; unknown danger awaits us. How about this? If we all return safely, I will talk to Feng Nu. If she agrees, we'll put on a show. How's that?"

Zi Qing Meng fell silent for a time. Her voice strange, she then asked, "You and Feng Nu aren't really in a relationship? What about that female mage? Not with her either?"

Nian Bing was growing impatient. "You seem to want every beautiful girl to be my girlfriend. Then you might as well be my girlfriend. Honestly, I'm single right now. For a long time in the future, I will still be single. I have only friends, no girlfriend. I hope that you won't nag me about this. Now, tell me about the second thing."

For some unknown reason, Zi Qing Meng's face turned red.

Lowering her head, she said, “Sorry, it was my mistake.”

Nian Bing stared blankly. This was the first time he had seen such an expression appear on Zi Qing Meng. She was apologizing! His tone immediately grew softer. “It’s nothing. I just don’t want to be agitated by people misunderstanding my own issues.”

Zi Qing Meng raised her head to give Nian Bing a look. “Last night, after that thing happened I had a vague premonition. Feng Nu is strong and can protect herself, but Big Brother and I definitely cannot. You know that I’m just a swordmaster. If I encountered such a sudden attack, I’m afraid... So, in case we meet the enemy, can you use magic to take care of Big Brother and I?” Seeing Nian Bing’s surprised expression, she hastily explained, “We aren’t afraid of dying; Big Brother doesn’t even know I came to find you. But Big Brother and I are the Orchid Dream College’s successors. Father only has us two, so no matter when, our lives have always been most important to us. So I came to find you, can you help us?”

Nian Bing’s expression was stern. “Miss Zi, we haven’t known each other for long, but we are, at the very least, friends. You don’t need to worry. As long as I’m safe, I will protect my friends.”

Zi Qing Meng smiled. Nian Bing found that her smiling face was much more pleasant to look at than her usual chilly expression.

“Thank you, Nian Bing.” Zi Qing Meng stood up, about to leave the tent.

“Miss Zi, don’t you think my answer was too selfish?” Nian Bing asked curiously.

Zi Qing Meng’s back was to him as she shook her head. “No, of course not. At least, this confirms that you are not a hypocrite. If you yourself are in danger, how can you protect us? Thank you for your promise.” Having said that, she lifted the curtains and was on her way.

“So she was actually this reasonable. It seems that you cannot belittle anyone. I hope that they will be able to leave here with their lives,” Nian Bing muttered to himself.

“Nian Bing, can I come in?” A soft voice came from outside.

Nian Bing groaned inwardly. How come beautiful girls kept coming in one after another? The mercenary troop definitely saw this; what were they thinking? However, this is the last one, but this was the one he couldn’t refuse. It would be more accurate to say he had somewhat anticipated her coming. “Ling’er, please enter. It’s cold out.”

The curtains were lifted once more, and he was faced with the girl who refused to talk to him walking in. She wasn’t wearing her customary, thick fur coat, and the ice mage’s robe looked thin. Paired with her pale face, her appearance would elicit feelings of pity.

Long Ling sat down in front of Nian Bing, her pretty face smiling slightly. “Nian Bing, we’ve been apart for several months. How are

you?” She looked at him gently, but the distress deep in her eyes remained unchanged.

“Ling’er, I’m very well. How about you?” After he said this, Nian Bing nearly slapped himself. Did Long Ling look well?

Unexpectedly, Long Ling nodded. “I’m feeling very well! Did you know? Since you left, I used the spirit training method you taught me and advanced to the great mage realm. If I had more time to cultivate, I think that I could become a magic scholar before you.”

Nian Bing lowered his head. “Then I must congratulate you.”

Long Ling smiled. “There is nothing to congratulate. In terms of talent, you are far above me. Oh, that’s right, I still haven’t congratulated you. When are you and Miss Feng Nu getting married? If I’m still here, remember to give me an invitation.”

Nian Bing felt his heart squeeze. “If you’re still here? What does that mean? Feng Nu and I are just normal friends, just like we are. Please, do not mistake anything.”

“Ordinary friends?” Her distressed expression intensified. “Then I have misunderstood. However, Miss Feng Nu is very beautiful. You aren’t pursuing such a beautiful girl?”

Nian Bing sighed lightly. “As you might remember, I already told you I don’t have the right to love. That wasn’t an excuse, but my true, heartfelt words.”

Long Ling smiled. “This has nothing to do with me. Oh, that’s right, Father wanted me to pass on to you to not forget to represent the association in the mage tournament. It’ll be here in just half a year.”

Nian Bing nodded. “Since I promised Teacher, I definitely will go.”

Long Ling’s eyes lit up significantly. “Then you must live through this task. You must always attach the utmost importance onto your life. I’m giving this to you, please wear it.” While saying this, she fished out some clothes from from her magic robe. What looked like a vest sparkled with red-gold light. It seemed to be made of a very light material, like gauze. Nian Bing asked, “What is this?”

Long Ling’s eyes crinkled. “As you already know, we mages have very weak bodies. Father wanted me to give you this vest. When you wear it, it can block a large portion of the attack power from even a expert of the martial saint realm. It’s the best defensive item for mages. I have no idea how it was made, but Father already tried it. It wasn’t even destroyed by a rank 10 spell, and it was specially made for qi attacks. I came to find you to complete the task Father gave me. Take it and then I will leave. We will probably encounter danger tomorrow, so please, be careful.” Long Ling stuffed the red-gold vest into Nian Bing’s hands then flashed a smile at him before leaving.

The reddish gold vest felt like he wasn’t even holding anything. He shook it out gently, and a faint fragrance assailed his nostrils.

Nian Bing concentrated on the vest and used a flame spell. In comparison to the firelight, the vest sparkled faintly. Nian Bing had never seen such a material before. With just a light tug, the superbly elastic vest was stretched out. When he let go, it resumed its original form. So that's why Long Ling said that the president gave him this small vest.

Gaining another item that could save his life was a happy thing. Nian Bing immediately took off his own clothes and shimmied into the vest. As expected, the vest was wonderfully elastic and fit him like a skin, while he still felt very well-ventilated. Nian Bing used a flame spell on himself to test it out and couldn't feel a scorching sensation. The vest didn't have a single mark. It seemed to be a true treasure.

The fragrance from before had intensified on the vest. Caressing it softly, Nian Bing suddenly trembled. His brain seemed to be struck by lightning as his entire person became dull.

He pulled up a corner of the vest and pressed it carefully next to his nose. His body shivered slightly. What do you mean Master gave him this vest, what do you mean he was afraid that he would be in danger. Teacher Long Zhi couldn't possibly have guessed that Ling'er would meet him here. What's more, people were selfish. Ling'er was also a mage. With such a protective treasure and as a father, he would naturally give this to his own daughter. This fragrance was indeed familiar because it was Ling'er's! She had obviously been wearing it. Long Zhi gave her this protective treasure, but she had given it to him. This was the world's biggest idiot. Ling'er, you truly are too stupid. Why are you so good to me? I am not worth such kindness! Ling'er; I'm sorry for being so unworthy of you.

Chapter 60.1 - Slaughtering The Land

Dragon Legion

Two crystalline tears slid down from the corners of Nian Bing's eyes. He knew that no matter what, he could not maintain his present attitude to Long Ling. Ling'er gave this vest to him and also said those things. Very obviously, she had given up on her own safety for him. She hadn't even told him the truth, instead spinning a tale for his sake. Nian Bing's heart trembled. This was the first time it had trembled for a woman. He gripped the hem of the vest tightly, trying his utmost to tamp down on his emotions.

Long Ling's warmth stayed in his mind, roiling in his heart. That gentle, beautiful face, that delicate voice deeply shocked him to the core.

Inhaling deeply, he forced himself to calm his emotions. Ling'er, how could I let you abandoned your own safety for me? If I did that, I could not call myself a man. His heart felt like it was struck with lightning as he looked at the vest he couldn't even feel. He made his decision. He picked up the phoenix flute on the side and gently blew through it.

Early morning the next day, Li De had finally recovered all of his lost magic power. The group set out again, the mercenaries still vigilant despite the peace of the day before. They were on watch for everything that could happen around them.

Nian Bing sat on the sedan, sneaking glances at Long Ling from time to time. Long Ling wore the same expression as yesterday, calm, with a tinge of sadness. Occasionally, she would look off into

the distance, her eyes empty. Nian Bing's heart stung. He knew that he would never be able to forget what Long Ling looked like right now.

Ka Luo's hand rested on his sword handle as he walked while reading the map. Loudly, he said, "Everybody focus. We are getting ever closer to our goal. After passing two mountains and going through a cavity, we will be able to find our treasure. In order to reunite with your families, in order to be able to live better days, please, give you me your focus so we may all go home."

Just as he had finished speaking, a low roar from not far away tensed up all of the mercenary group. The ground shook, and a gigantic silhouette came barrelling from behind a mountain. As it roared, it became obvious it was headed for the Ice Moon Mercenary Group.

Nian Bing was surprised to find that the strange beast charging ahead was about 2.5 meters tall with it's upper half erect. It was covered from head to toe in steel grey skin that looked extremely hard. It was shaped roughly like a lizard, though it was obviously much bigger than a lizard. Two rows of fin-like protrusions stuck out of its back, and its two powerful hind legs supported its massive body. A long tail dragged along behind it. When it roared angrily, it exposed its giant teeth and mouth overflowing with saliva. It was about 7 meters long, and its front limbs were much smaller than its hind limbs, but were adorned with large claws. It charged forward rapidly. How could they be so unlucky? It was an iron-backed land dragon!

While his heart howled against the unfairness, Nian Bing did not

forget to warn his companions, “Watch out, everyone. This is a iron-backed land dragon; it has a fearsome defense.” With a shout, he immediately condensed his magic power. He had already seen a iron-backed land dragon before and did not dare be lenient.

Nian Bing consoled himself that this was just a iron-backed land dragon, obviously smaller than the one from that time. Its attack power should also be less. He waved both his hands and formed a fireball and ice ball and took the initiative to attack the land dragon.

This land dragon was obviously not very intelligent and did not slow down its attack at all. When the fireball and ice ball converged in front of it, it exploded powerfully. In the sound of the explosion, the iron-backed land dragon charging speed slowed. Just as Nian Bing had determined, the fusing of rank 1 spells had no effect against this guy. Even the special ice and fire attack was not enough to effect its actions. As he was preparing to attack again, a large silhouette jumped out of the group of mercenaries.

“Fuck, this little reptile thinks it can block our way. This old woman will hack you to death,” came the angry bellow. Hua Rui’s rotund figure charged to the sky, colliding directly with the land dragon. Nian Bing was afraid to accidentally hurt her, so he hastily released his spell.

A strange scene played out before them. When the iron-backed land dragon tried to swat Hua Rui’s wheel-like axes, a explosive sound erupted. Its forward momentum was disintegrated entirely as cracks appeared in its claws. Hua Rui did not have the slightest intention of letting it go. An intense white qi emerged from her

body, dying her giant battle axes white as she came hacking down at the land dragon.

“When a land dragon meets a mommy T-rex, it’s all out of luck,” said a mercenary in schadenfreude.

No other mercenary went up to help. They seemed to be accustomed to Hua Rui’s battle style. With her martial master qi and her innate strength, she delivered a fatal blow to the land dragon. The iron-backed land dragon’s strong body actually was unable to offer up any resistance against those giant axes. Several, ear-piercing sounds erupted in succession. Nian Bing was shocked to discover that the iron-backed land dragon’s gigantic head had been separated from its body. Fountains of blood spurted out of its stump as its massive body fell to the ground with a thud.

Heavens! Was this not the same kind of land dragon that narrowly claimed his life? Although it was not on the same level, it should not be that easy to kill it. Nian Bing looked over to Hua Rui’s eyes, which were gleaming.

Hua Rui had been very depressed for the past two days. The enemy had been hiding away like a mouse playing a trick on a cat, flashing in and out of sight. She could not resist meeting with the sudden but upfront attack. Her powerful body strength and qi was actually enough to hack it to death. The dead land dragon was not free of her anger, as her battle axes continuously hacked away at its corpse along with a slew of blood flowers.

Long Ling had lowered her head, unable to look at such a sight. Feng Nu and Zi Qing Meng were not so affected, but they were

surprised by Hua Rui's ferocity.

“Ruirui, that's enough already. Save your strength; there are still many unknown things ahead of us.” Ka Luo stopped Hua Rui from desecrating the corpse. Hua Rui hoisted both her axes, acting as if there is no one second to her. A wild beast roared. She said roughly, “Well fuck. See who dares offend our Ice Moon Mercenary Group. Not even one land dragon, even if it was ten, a hundred, i would slaughter them all.”

Jia Te Lin said angrily, “Shut your goddamn crow's beak.”

Hua Rui retorted, “What, you don't accept it? If you have the talent, then face me.”

He snorted. “You idiot. Look behind the mountain.”

Everyone saw over twenty land dragons marching out from behind the mountain. Their bellows gradually grew clearer. The frontmost land dragon violently slammed its foot on the ground, heralding the wave that came behind it.

One iron-backed land dragon was already quite imposing. Over twenty of them conducting a simultaneous assault could even cause the mommy t-rex Hua Rui to grow grim. This attack power could not be stopped by one person alone.

Ka Luo barked out his orders, “Quickly, get the mages back. Don't let them have a direct confrontation.”

The eight mercenaries hoisting the sedan flew backwards. Right then, Nian Bing suddenly shouted. “Do not sway. Warriors, prepare for battle. I will deal with their assault.” He waved his right hand, and two magic scrolls came flying out. Red light and blue light simultaneous erupted—it was the Fire God’s Left Hand followed by an ice globe, flying at the land dragons.

Previously, Nian Bing’s rank 5 Ice and Fire Source fused spell had made Magister Long Zhi have a whole new level of respect for him. Right now, in the face of these gigantic land dragons, he once again used his special ability. Only this time, time was pressing so he had to use his magic scrolls. He firmly believed in the three mages with him, so all he had to do was stop the initial onslaught, and support would arrive.

Currently the ice and fire fusion magic was much different than before. Through deeper comprehension of the two types of magic, Nian Bing was able to truly bring out the might of the Ice and Fire Source. When the two rank 5 spells exploded, they produced the force of a rank 7 spell. Even a golden-backed land dragon would not be able to calmly pass through the spell, and these were just iron-backed land dragons.

With a massive explosion, the front four land dragons were immediately sent flying backwards, colliding with the land dragons behind them. A pit six meters in diameter was left on the ground and the land dragons’ momentum had dissipated. The dragons hit by the explosion lost their scales, their flesh and blood flying. Although it was not fatal, this was no light injury. Most of their defense was on their backs; their chests were far weaker.

Ka Luo responded exceedingly quickly. He intuitively organized the warriors into an expansive formation and charged at the land dragons. At the same time, earth great mage Feng Yun had just finished his first spell.

The earth shook fiercely as a giant crack split open the earth, starting from the center of the giant pit Nian Bing had made. The fissure divided the land dragons; this was the rank 5 Earth Splitter. Earth Splitter could not directly attack the dragons, but it was enough to slow their movements. Hua Rui took the lead and charged at the land dragons who had lost their footing. Right now, she felt she did not resemble a woman at all. Of course, in other people's eyes, she had never been a woman to begin with. A land dragon's head was sent flying, blood spurting out copiously.

Jia Te Lin also showcased his martial master strength as he vaulted into the air. While he didn't have Hua Rui's explosive power, his attack was more subversive and vicious. His short swords were like the teeth of a poisonous snake, stabbing mercilessly into the weakest part of the land dragon—its eyes. After stabbing one he immediately turned to the next. The dragon with the serious wound bellowed angrily, attacking living things around it while blood continued to spurt out of its eyes. Even if it had a strong body, it could not keep living with a damaged brain. Its death was inevitable.

Multi-colored flashes of qi glinted as the mercenaries fought. They weren't as fearsome as their vice-captains, but great swordmaster qi was no laughing matter. The mercenaries worked together in silent concert; one portion of them would use qi to attract the land dragon's attention, while the other portion,

learning from Jia Te Lin, would attack the land dragon's defenseless eyes. If they used their qi to protect themselves, even if they were swatted down by a land dragon, as long as they weren't hit straight on they would survive. In time, the flow of the battle managed to go to the mercenary group.

Ka Luo did not take action, instead surveying the land dragons in front of them. He was waiting in case one of his subordinates faced imminent danger so he could rescue them. This was the cooperation of a high-level mercenary group.

Perhaps it was the heavens playing a joke on the Ice Moon Mercenary Group, but just as they held the dominant position, Feng Nu suddenly cried out in alarm. "Careful everyone. There are some to the rear!"

The mercenaries responsible for carrying the sedans immediately responded. When they turned around they couldn't help but gasp. Behind them were iron-backed land dragons, and they were at least an astonishing thirty of them.

Zi Qing Meng said in shock, "Heavens! Could it be we have broken into a lizard nest?" She and Feng Nu jumped into the fray with blades in hand.

Zi Qing Jian's ice blade was a broad, heavy sword. In a flash, he jumped in front of his sister. At the moment Zi Qing Meng was looking at Nian Bing. Nian Bing could not help but sigh and curse his carelessness. He should have prepared his two spells earlier, but now the land dragons were already on the assault. Helpless, he could only fish out another two magic scrolls.

At this time, Li De, who had not used a spell before, made his move. If the mercenaries were looking down on Li De because his search spell had been counter-devoured, nearly costing him his life, after this spell, no one would dare belittle this mage of the highest rank..

Nian Bing might have been careless, but Li De had not been. This was the proof of experience. Chanting quietly, his magic wand above his head, a halo of blue light came together in front of him. The blue halo began to rotate quickly and a blink of an eye, a blue vortex had formed. This mighty vortex charged for the land dragon herd with enormous power. Although strong, they were unable to overcome the rotational force of the vortex. Immediately, the thirty or so land dragons had been swept inside, their bodies colliding with one another non-stop. What would happen if similarly hard bodies were to slam against each other continuously? The blue vortex filled with red.

Spiralling Water Waves? Nian Bing was uncommonly surprised. This water spell was extremely obscured. It was classified as a rank 7 spell, but this spell did not have great attack power. If there was only one enemy, it would not have any attack power. In case there is not enough magic power to support the spell, the vortex would just disappear. Besides causing the enemy to have a dizzying sensation, it was not special at all, especially when used against a warrior with martial skills. As long as the opponent had strong enough qi, they could easily breakthrough the vortex. However, against these super strong land dragons, the effects were extremely obvious. Not only could it stop their forward charge, it could also cause them to slam against one another, causing serious damage.

Chapter 60.2 - Slaughtering The Land Dragon Legion

“Ling’er, use Twin Ice Globes, quickly,” Li De ordered anxiously.

The sluggish Long Ling hurried to begin chanting. “Powerful ice element! Condense and turn into the ice from the ancient cold river, turn into the ice from the splendid moon. Ice and ice combine and become two ice globes.” Two giant ice globes appeared. Perhaps it was the influence of Nian Bings’ control techniques, but Long Ling deliberately compressed the ice globes. Although time was short, they looked substantially firmer.

A light flashed in Nian Bing’s eyes. He immediately understood what Li De was thinking. If there was just one thing in the vortex it would continue to spin until it was swallowed by the vortex. However, if it hit a stationary solid, it would easily smash to pieces when spinning with the vortex. The Twin Ice Globes were supposed to act as the stationary solid. Whether or not it could produce a good outcome would depend on Long Ling’s magic control.

The ice globes flew into the vortex, immediately slamming into the thirty plus land dragons one after the other. With the rotational momentum of the vortex, the ice globes were soon dyed red. Although Long Ling could not keep the ice globes perfectly still, they were a little slower than the whirring of the vortex.

“Mercenaries, I leave the rest to you.” After the ice globes had smashed the twelfth iron-backed land dragon into pieces, Li De stopped the spell. After all, maintaining an AoE rank 7 spell was

not easy, even for a magic scholar like him.

The dizzy land dragons finally managed to place their feet on solid ground. Zi Qing Jian shouted, “Nian Bing, help me protect my sister,” and was the first to charge out. His battle style was extremely similar to Hua Rui’s, and his impressive body strength was definitely not inferior to hers. The land dragons’ tough scales were no match for his heavy sword, and a land dragon head rolled on the ground.

There were close to twenty land dragons remaining that still hadn’t shaken off their dizziness when the eight mercenaries near Nian Bing launched their attack.

“Little Sister Feng Nu, are you not going?” asked Zi Qing Meng, who was worried about her brother.

Feng Nu smiled. “I do not like the stench of blood, and there is no need for me to take action right now anyway.”

Zi Qing Jian’s strength was already at the martial master level. Perhaps his qi did not have the depth of Jia Te Lin’s, but his innate body strength and courageous spirit meant he possessed an awesome destructive power. Under his lead, the first four land dragons were destroyed at the hands of the mercenaries. Finally, the dizzy land dragons regained their senses. Their gigantic claws and sword-like teeth posed no small trouble for the mercenaries. Massacring them would not be easy. Except for Zi Qing Jian, the other mercenaries chose to attack their eyes and deliver fatal blows. However the land dragons seemed to have wizened up as they stopped receiving terrible wounds.

There were sixteen land dragons left, and ten of them were surrounded by Zi Qing Jian and the others, while the remaining five were headed straight for Nian Bing and co.

Feng Nu gave Zi Qing Jian a look, then smiled bitterly. “See, now it’s time for me to make a move. Nian Bing, do not use any spells; save your magic power.” Her expression suddenly changed as a fiery red aura burst forth from her body. Her facial expression was abnormally calm as she charged at the five land dragons head-on.

Long Ling made a sound of alarm. “Nian Bing, hurry and use magic scrolls to help her. She will die if faces the land dragons head on.” The gentle, benevolent girl would have chanted a spell herself if there was enough time. She knew that the only one who could help Feng Nu right now was Nian Bing.

Nian Bing smiled but shook his head. “There is no need. Just wait and see.”

The red-clad figure was smoke as she smoke as she eerily wafted through to the center of the five land dragons. Even with Nian Bing’s visual acuity, he only saw flashes of silver light. The red figure never stopped moving and instead broke into the midst of the land dragons that Zi Qing Meng was engaged with. At the moment, Zi Qing Meng had already slain one.

The five land dragons were still wildly rushing at Nian Bing and them. Ka Luo, who had been observing them the whole time was about to intervene when he saw a strange sight. The five madly

rushing land dragons' upper halves slid down to the ground. Blood and broken flesh exploded over ten meters away when they were only thirty meters away from Nian Bing and the others. They had been turned to piles of meat.

Long Ling's face turned even paler, and the magic wand she was gripping was trembling slightly. Zi Qing Meng muttered, "D-didn't she say she didn't like the smell of blood?"

The corners of Nian Bing's mouth lifted "Yes, she does not like the smell of blood. If you didn't see, no blood splashed on her."

Zi Qing Meng mumbled, "Father once said that a true martial saint is equivalent to at least twenty martial masters. Since she just entered the martial saint realm, I think that she should be about equal to ten. What frightening power."

Although Feng Nu's strength was terrifying, the scene put on now was partly due to her Nine Heavenly Flames Sword. If she used this near god-grade blade with her Nine Flames Qi, cutting apart a iron-backed land dragons scales was not too different from cutting a piece of paper.

Right now, Zi Qing Jian's side had finished their battle. With Feng Nu in the fray, the land dragons could only die.

Ka Luo's voice suddenly spoke. "Nian Bing, watch out."

Nian Bing whirled around, only to see a giant land dragon

attacking him from the side, intending to collide with him. At the moment, Zi Qing Meng was scared stiff and Feng Yun was stunned. Only Long Ling and Li De could respond. Long Ling took out a magic scroll from his chest while Long Ling actually ran over to Nian Bing, turning her back to the land dragon only ten meters away.

“Ling’er!” Nian Bing was not scared by the land dragon, but he nearly jumped in fright because of Long Ling’s recklessness. His wrists shook as a red light flashed outwards.

An explosive sound erupted when the land dragon toppled down only three meters away from Long Ling. Its giant head had been split in two, the broad True Sun Knife embedded in its neck.

Before this land dragon had appeared, Nian Bing was prepared. He definitely would not commit the same offense twice. Perhaps a low ranked spell could not harm a land dragon, but with an exploding flame spell, the god-grade True Sun Knife could easily slice through a land dragon’s head. This is what he observed from Feng Nu’s Heavenly Flame Sword. He himself did not have any qi, but he hypothesized that a push from his magic would work the same way. This was the first time he had tried this and with great result.

Taking a step forward, Nian Bing tightly hugged Long Ling to his chest. “Ling’er, Ling’er, why are you so stupid!”

As he embraced her soft form, Nian Bing could not control his feelings. Long Ling’s silent care had deeply moved his heart. He knew that in this life, he could never throw away the girl in his

arms. After all, the human heart is made of flesh. Such a gentle and kind girl wanted to give her life for him. How could he remain emotionless?

Long Ling blushed prettily. Since Nian Bing had left, this was the first time she had felt at peace. In Nian Bing's warm embrace, her tears moistened his clothing.

Zi Qing Mengs' cough startled the pair, and Long Ling hastily shoved Nian Bing away. Her face was still red as she tried to rub away the remaining tears in her eyes.

Zi Qing Meng handed Nian Bing back his True Sun Knife. She teased, "Your kitchen knife has extensive applications. After cutting off a land dragon's head, don't use it to make our food."

Nian Bing smiled bitterly, "That was just an emergency measure. Relax, I will definitely clean True Sun. Ling'er, you cannot do such a thing again. I will protect you and me. Do you know just how much my heart hurt?"

Long Ling's expression was calm once more. "Nian Bing, we are just ordinary friends. Do not say such things to me again." She turned around and went back to her sedan.

Nian Bing went blank for a moment before hurrying after her. He grabbed Long Ling's hand. "Ling'er, it was my bad before. If you want, I-I will court you, is that alright?" His feelings were unavoidable, so as a reasonable person, Nian Bing chose to dress them directly. However, Long Ling's answer shocked him to the

core.

“Of course you cannot. Nian Bing, I forgot to tell you something. Senior Brother Shi Jiu and I are engaged.” Long Ling shook off Nian Bing’s hand, then sat down in her own sedan.

“What? Y-you and Shi Jiu are engaged? No, this can’t be. You are definitely lying to me, right?” Nian Bing was in a state of shock.

Long Ling gave him a look. “Why would I need to lie to you? Since you do not want me, I naturally found someone who did.”

A bitter feeling stabbed Nian Bing right in the heart. Lowering his head, he let out a heavy sigh. “Sorry and congratulations.” Nian Bing’s eyes burned with cold fire. His head snapped up as a land dragon from where Hua Rui was headed for them. At the moment, there were still eight land dragons left.

“Ignite, endless flame!” Nian Bing raised the True Sun Knife as the Flame God’s Roar increased the rate of fire element conversion. “Endless flame! Lend me your never ending passion. Arise, Surgent Flame.”

Surgent Flame was a rank 6 auxiliary fire spell. After using this spell, a rank 6 spell could gain the strength of a rank 7 spell. It was the spell fire great mages used to surpass their limits.

An intense flame flared up around Nian Bing. The fire was not even red, but a deep, ghostly blue.

“Mighty Fire God! Please allow me to make use of your left hand, and let the flame descend to earth to eradicate the wicked power. Let the blaze illuminate the whole earth and destroy all the barriers obstructing me. –The Fire God’s Left Hand.” The flames flared up around the Flame God’s Roar as the blue Flame God’s Left Hand hovered over Nian Bing.

“Cut everything before me.” He pointed the Flame God’s Roar forward. The normally rational Nian Bing’s heart had been ignited. He only desired slaughter, endless slaughter. The Flame God’s Roar and the Surgent Flame spell had brought the power of Fire God’s Left Hand to rank 7. The blue hand grabbed a land dragon’s head.

The land dragon screamed as the it came in contact with the scorching hand. With a bang, the Fire God’s Left Hand crushed its head. The slaughter was not over yet as Nian Bing wildly exploded another land dragon’s head.

The land dragon’s giant body was cast to aside as the blue flames covered it, producing an acrid stench. These ordinary land dragons were no older than twenty, thirty years old, far younger than the golden-backed land dragon king that Nian Bing had met before. The burning land dragons rolled on the ground in an attempt to extinguish the flames, but like the fires of hell, these flames would not go out.

“Kill, kill, kill!” The rank 7 Fire God’s Left Hand showed their power as the giant hand sent the remaining land dragons flying, then encased them in a ball of flame. A massive quantity of magic

power was consumed to support the spell, but Nian Bing did not care. Everyone looking on was dumbfounded. They saw that Nian Bing's eyes had turned red at some point.

When the last land dragon exploded, the Fire God's Left Hand disappeared, not because Nian Bing wanted to but because he had not enough power to support a rank 7 spell.

Weakness engulfed his mind, but he could only feel his heart aching. His heart aching for Long Ling.

"Nian Bing, are you all right?" Feng Nu's concerned voice penetrated Nian Bing's haze. This was the first time she had seen Nian Bing go wild like this. He had abandoned conserving his magic power and chose for an all-out flame attack. This was inconsistent with his rational self.

Breathing roughly, Nian Bing shook his head. "Thank you, I am fine. I just wanted to vent."

The mercenaries were now gathered around. Ka Luo's perception of the mages and Feng Nu had completely changed. There were near sixty land dragons, and the greater portion of them had been destroyed by Nian Bing and them. This confirmed their strength. If there were only mercenaries, they would be able to achieve victory but at a much steeper price. Ka Luo could not help feel that he had made the right decision to ask Nian Bing and his friends to join in on this operation.

"President Ka Luo, everyone is tired. We should rest before

advancing,” Nian Bing relayed calmly, before going off to the side.

Ka Luo wanted to say something, but Feng Nu stopped him. “Let him be alone.”

The president spoke respectfully, “I really did not think that Miss was a martial saint. Ka Luo hopes you can forgive his earlier rudeness.” Martial saints had incomparable influence in the martial world. Because of the martial saint in his ranks, Ka Luo had completely recovered the confidence shaken by the appearance of the large number of land dragons.

Chapter 61.1 - The Fire Dragon People

Feng Nu laughed politely. “President, no need for such courtesy. To be honest, I have not truly attained the martial saint realm. The future is vast and unknown, we must be more careful! First, everyone should regain their strength.”

Ka Luo nodded. “Jia Te Lin, how are our casualties?”

Jia Te lin appeared next to Ka Luo. “Captain, we have seven lightly injured, no heavily injured, and no deaths. In total, our battle strength is secure. I really did not think that we could so easily annihilate sixty iron-backed land dragons. This is thanks to the mages and Miss Feng Nu.”

Ka Luo said, “Everybody, let’s rest here and recover as much qi as possible. The uninjured brothers must stay on watch and guard against any other magic beast attack. It’s such a shame about those land dragons. If we could tame them we could become the number one mercenary group—a land dragon cavalry!”

Hua Rui’s voice, like a broken gong, spoke, “What’s a shame? It’s already pretty good that we didn’t become these land dragons’ dinner. If we wanted to grab a land dragon it would have to be on our own and young in order to tame it. How would this be easy.”

Ka Luo laughed heartily. “That’s right! It is lucky that we are without casualties. Ruirui, rest up. You used a lot of strength.”

Nian Bing walked over to a different corner of the hillside to sit

alone. His crazy attack had consumed nearly half of his magic power. Without hesitation, he entered a meditative state. At the same time, he split his mind in order to think over about what Long Ling had said before.

They rested for two hours. The injured mercenaries had their wounds wrapped and recovered their strength. The rest drank some water and rested. The appearance of the land dragons did not harm their morale but actually boosted their spirits. After all, iron-backed land dragons had a fearsome name in the Yangguang Continent for ultimate defense and fearsome attack power. They made a premium, highly coveted mount for any empire. It was just a shame there had never been anyone who could organize a land dragon cavalry and this time they had just wiped out sixty of them. Additionally, Feng Nu, Nian Bing and the others displaying awesome might also boosted the mercenaries' confidence.

When Nian Bing returned to the main group, he was wearing his usual smile. As a man of reason, he would definitely not let his worries weigh on him for too long through careful consideration of the pros and cons. He walked over to Long Ling and said quietly, "Ling'er, there will be unknown dangers ahead. You must be very cautious, and definitely do not get injured because of a moment of compassion. Promise me, okay?"

When Long Ling had told Nian Bing about her engagement with Shi jiu, she did not feel well. But for some reason, when Nian Bing had been venting on the land dragons, she felt a feeling of elation come over her. Right now, when she saw how quickly Nian Bing had returned to normal, her heart sunk again. She nodded her head slightly, indicating that she understood.

“As for our issues, let’s talk about them after this operation is over, okay? Do not suffer unduly. Cheer up.” Having said this, Nian Bing retreated over to his sedan to discuss the plan of progression with Ka Luo.

As she looked at Nian Bing’s back, Long Ling did not know why her heart trembled. Logic told her that she should not try to get close to Nian Bing again, but Nian Bing’s last line made her feel mysteriously confident. What did he mean by that?

“President Ka Luo, what do you think about the land dragon attack?” Nian Bing asked coolly.

Ka Luo creased his brows. “It is very possible that it was orchestrated by the enemy. Land dragons are a solitary magic beast; so many congregating together is strange. Moreover, they attacked us on two fronts; that is even more strange. I think that is a scheme from the enemy who sneak attacked us that day.”

Nian Bing nodded. “I also think this. So we must be even more careful with our next movements. The enemy is definitely much stronger than we imagined. If we cannot deal with them, I hope your decision-making is swift so we can retreat quickly. Life is the most precious thing we have. Sacrificing our lives for money and other benefits is definitely an unwise choice.”

Ka Luos’ face twisted, and after quite a while, he nodded reluctantly. “You are probably right. If it weren’t for you joining, I’m afraid our task would have already failed.”

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Deep in the Tian Dang Mountains.

“Bastard, who told you to order the land dragon legion to attack those humans?”

“That is, Elder, those land dragons are really stupid and they normally fight against the other life forms in the mountains; they don’t really have any other use. I think that those humans should have already died. Based on their strength, they only amount to the land dragons’ lunch.”

“Hmph, Luo Yi, how many times have I told you that you cannot look down on humans. The iron-backed land dragons possess extremely small traces of dragon bloodline, but they are still related to dragons. If Lord Dragon blames you, it will all be your fault. Honestly speaking, I can’t feel the aura of the land dragons you dispatched.”

“What? That’s impossible. How could those humans be so strong? It would not even be easy for us to deal with over sixty land dragons.”

“Have you forgotten what I just said? If they didn’t have the strength why would they enter our Tian Dang Mountains with such fanfare? Those humans dare to covet Lord Dragon’s treasure trove. Has the wound on your back healed so soon? Go prepare for us to greet our guests.”

“Elder, I know I was wrong. But don’t worry, with the strength of our clan, we will definitely be to stop them from leaving. And even if they are strong, they cannot match Lord Dragon.”

“Impudent, Lord Dragon definitely cannot be disturbed. Have you forgotten what happened last time Lord Dragon was woken up from his slumber?”

“Ah! Elder, I apologize. I will go at once.”

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The Ice Moon Mercenary Group set out once more. After passing over one more mountain, they were astonished to find the landscape change completely.

Not a shred of winter could be found here. It was a warm spring. As far as the eye could see, the not very tall mountains were covered in a lush green; the temperature was much warmer than all the other mountains. The dense vegetation set people’s hearts at ease as the scent of flowers filled the air. Every kind of animal was shuttling back and forth on the mountain forest; the sounds of insects and songbirds were heard distinctly. They could even hear the sounds of water on the mountainside. Here, there was no sense of danger, a utopia! The dichotomy of what lay before them and what behind made the mercenaries stop in their tracks. Right now, they finally understood why there were no signs of animals existing on the outer mountains.

Nian Bing inhaled deeply through his nose, then said coldly.

“This is the source of the fire aura. The ability to produce such a strange scene in the midst of a severe winter only confirms the specialness of this place. Teacher Li De, do you feel it? The fire element here is particularly lively while the other elements are lacking.”

Li De nodded and frowned. “Could it be that this is related to the treasure trove? If there is a fire gem vein here, it could possibly change the weather like this.”

Upon hearing about a fire gem vein, all of the mercenaries’ eyes shone. How many gemstones would it take to turn several mountains into a warm spring!? If there really was a vein, it would rival an empire’s wealth.

Nian Bing shook his head. “We could not be so lucky. Besides there being an entire mountain worth of fire gems, there couldn’t be such lush vegetation. There is something strange here. President Ka Luo, you cannot forget what I said.”

Ka Luo nodded. “We should keep going. Even though there is an enemy here, we must take the chance.”

The mercenary group descended the slopes. The warmth made them even change their thick clothing. Their progress was much quicker than before. Nian Bing sent his spirit out in order to observe his surroundings and probe for the existence of an enemy. The enemy had warned them that day, so someone will definitely appear today to stop their advance.

However, the Ice Moon Mercenary Group advanced forward much easier than they had imagined. Not only were there no signs of an enemy, even the wild animals of the forests had avoided them. No difficulties had disappeared. Sitting on the sedan surrounded by beautiful sights, Nian Bing's nervousness abated slightly.

As they drew closer to their goal, the surrounding temperature increased. When they finally caught sight of the their target mountain, the environment felt no different than a summer's day. Ka Luo ordered everyone to take off their heavy clothes in order to lighten up for battle. They continued on.

Jia Te Lin, at Ka Luo's suggestion, jumped up into the air. He pushed off lightly against a large tree, sending himself hire once again until he reached the top of the tree. At the top of the tree he pushed himself off again, until he was sent near 26 meters in the air.

Nian Bing couldn't prevent himself from envying the sight of Jia Te Lin light body skill. In certain aspects, warriors had a superiority that mages couldn't hope to match!

The body in the air floated down like a leaf. Jia Te Lin's icy face was lit up by excitement. "President, I saw that there is a large cave on the base of the mountain ahead of us. It was easily visible from outside, and there seemed to be no one guarding it."

Ka Luo's eyes sparkled. "This seems much too convenient. We must not let down our guard. Let's go."

They continued their way through the mountains. After passing through a lush forest, they could finally see the cave that Jia Te lin had spoke of. The cave really was big; the mouth was almost 35 meters wide and the insides so dark they could not see anything inside. Ka Luo pulled out the map and scrutinized it carefully. It was true, this cave was where the treasure trove was.

Ka Luo took a big stride over to the cave, looked all around, then barked out, “Let four people guard the mouth of the cave. Everyone else, protect the mages as we go in. We must move quickly.”

“There is no need for that. Once you came here, your lives were already forfeit.” A deep voice gravelly with age spoke, and the air around them suddenly became abnormally hot. From the forest around the cave and above the mouth of the cave leapt out nimble figures. They were entirely red. Ka Luo felt an enormous pressure on his head and unconsciously took a step back back into his own mercenary group. This obviously was a trap laid for them.

Both sides sized each other up. Ka Luo and his mercenaries were in a clear area, while their enemies were always in a hidden spot. Right now, as they looked at one another, Ka Luo couldn't help but gasp cold hair. Were they even human?

There were hundreds of red shapes before them, surrounding the mercenaries from all directions. They were identical to humans in stature, without any difference, but it was easy to see a huge difference in their skin. Well, it would be more accurate to say that these enemies did not have skin. Their bodies were covered

entirely with a layer of fine, dark red scales. Their rough clothing only covered the important spots. Under the sunlight trickling in through the shade of the stress, their scales glowed with a dark red luster. The sudden increase in temperature seemed to be of their making.

Eying the three, tall scaled people right in front of him, Ka Luo said solemnly, “We have inadvertently caused you trouble. We just want the things in the cave. Perhaps we could come to an agreement.”

The middle scaled man seemed to be very old. He said coolly, “That is impossible. In that cave lives our mighty Lord Dragon. Don’t even talk about going in; now that you have seen our clansmen, you cannot leave here with your lives. If you want to commit suicide, we will leave you with that concession. Killing such lowly humans would dirty my hands.”

Ka Luo glanced at his surroundings. All the scaled people showed outward calm, flexing their fingers tipped in what looked to be sharp claws as they looked at them with cold gazes. He continued to calm himself because he knew, that if every scaled person was as strong as the two who had attacked them that night, they would not be able to escape today with their lives.

Just as Ka Luo had no idea how to respond to the situation, Nian Bing spoke up. “Sir, hello. We have come here because of a treasure map. We bear now hostility to your noble clan and we did not know that this was your personal treasure. If you do not want us to take the treasure, then we will just leave. Is there a need to harm friendly relations?”

“Leave? So that you can come back with more humans and disturb Lord Dragon’s rest? That is impossible. If you will not kill yourselves, then we will kill you.” He raised his hand to order the scaled people to attack.

Nian Bing and Feng Nu exchanged glances with Feng Nu. He suddenly recalled what Xi La De told him. With surprise he asked, “You are the dragon people? Are you the dragon people who protects the great dragons?”

Chapter 61.2 - The Fire Dragon People

When they heard Nian Bing call them the Dragon People, the silent Dragon People started. The front most elder frowned. “You know about us?”

Nian Bing nodded. “I have about the existence of the Dragon People before. That said, the cave you are guarding must be a greater dragon’s treasure trove.”

“That’s right, we are the Fire Dragon People. I can tell you that I am the elder of this clan, Jin Ni. Even if you know this, it is no use. Today you must die here, for offending the sanctity of the Dragon People. Now kill them!”

“Go, Dance of the Billowing Waves,” said an aged voice. A ring of blue light suddenly condensed and spread outward, pulsing at the Fire Dragon People. Nian Bing opened dialogue with them at Li De’s prompting, so that he could buy more time for the incantation. Their opponents never had any intention to release them, so they could only fight back their hardest.

Dance of the Billowing Waves was a rank 8 AoE attack water spell. It consumed an extremely large amount of magic, but it was the best choice for dealing with a large amount of enemies. It was just a shame that in the Fire Dragon People’s domain, water magic spells were greatly weakened. This normally rank 8 spell only had the power of a rank 7.

The waves rippled out in all directions, like a hoard of water

arrows stopping the Fire Dragon People's advance. Red qi blew around them, holding back the Dance of the Billowing Wave's endless attack. Feng Nu suddenly shouted. "Head for the caves! It will be easier to defend there!"

Nian Bing's eyes lit up. That's right! To advance you must retreat. Before Ka Luo, Jia Te Lin, and Hua Rui could head for the cave, he first threw out two magic scrolls. This was his life saving skill.

Ice and fire. The two strongest rank 6 spells that Nian Bing could control instantly burst out of the scrolls. Red, blue light smashed together and a violent explosion seemed to shake the entire mountain range. The Ice and Fire Source was pushed to its limits to produce a powerful force equivalent to a rank 8 spell that charged at the elder.

While Li De's powerful spell incoming on the other side, the Fire Dragon People elder grimaced when heard Feng Nu's shout. Silver qi covered his body, and he pressed his two hands in front of him, intending to destroy Li De's spell when the Nian Bing's magic slammed into him.

A rank 8 attack spell could not threaten a martial saint ranked warrior, even less so with super strong bodies like the Fire Dragon People. But it was able to produce giant vibrations. The Fire Dragon Elder only stepped back one step to stabilize himself, but the ten or so Fire Dragon People next to him were suddenly sent flying by the tremors. They seemed to be frightened of the giant hole behind them, preferring to be hit by the spell than step back. They forced themselves to the side, making the only left in front of

the cave mouth the elder. Right at this time, Hua Rui came charging in with her massive battle axes.

Ding! Ding! Hua Rui flew backwards, spurting blood. Her opponent had actually gouged her two battle axes. Ka Luo and Jia Te Lin were not any slower than her as they flew backwards too. Against a true martial saint, martial masters had no chance. The elder vented his anger, intensifying the silver qi around himself. To be attacked in succession by magic and three martial masters' all out attacks, valiant as he was, could not himself from bleeding.

The mercenaries were pressing forward as Feng Nu suggested. At the moment, the first attack arrived on them, but a red light countered it. The light came within a meter of the Fire Dragon People elder when the red suddenly turned silver. The resplendent cry of the phoenix burst free and a silver, fuzzy silhouette of a sword appeared vaguely before Jin Ni's eyes. His expression changed slightly as he thrust both his fists out of him. Holy qi surged from him, about to collide with the sword.

"Phoenix! Plume! Slice!" came a voice like broken silk. Just like the silver qi, the hazy sword suddenly formed substance, firmly cutting down on Jin Ni's emitted qi. The tail flames were headed straight for Jin Ni's chest.

"Are you truly looking for death?" Jin Ni roared angrily. He suddenly leapt upwards, bellowing like a dragon. The light of a sword flashed as Feng Nu attacked at the place where he had been standing.

Feng Nu was abnormally calm as the cry of the phoenix came

from her mouth. The silver qi around her body expanded several times. “Dance! Of! The! Nine! Heavens! Phoenix!” The Heavenly Flame Sword suddenly slowed as she raised it. She and her divine sword then engaged in a beautiful dance.

Jin Ni’s expression completely changed. Although his qi was more powerful than Feng Nu, he was not certain he could withstand such successive attacks from Feng Nu’s Heavenly Flame Sword. He waved his arms weirdly in the air, looking for the chance to interrupt the Nine Heavenly Flame Divine Sword’s qi, but Feng Nu would not give him such an opportunity. Dance of the Nine Heavens Phoenix’s bizarre movements forced him to output qi all around him.

Blood sprayed. Jin Ni’s chest scales came off, leaving only half an inch deep, approximately 1/6 of a meter long wound. The fresh blood on his scales made them even more vivid. He was also sent flying backwards and fell just outside the mouth of the cave. His scaly head was expressionless, but Nian Bing was paying close attention, so he caught the sliver of panic in his eyes. So he hadn’t suffered major losses. What was he worried about?

Finally, Li De’s spell dissipated after a wild attack by a large quantity of fire-attributed qi. But fortunately, Feng Yun was right in time to use his own rank 6 earth spell as well and so was Long Ling to use her AoE Ice Blade Slice, assisted by the mercenaries temporarily stopping the Fire Dragon People’s attack. The Fire Dragon warriors’ attack was extremely powerful. Each of them were at least swordmasters in strength, and there were no lack of martial masters. Ka Luo and the other two vice-captains who had been sent flying away earlier forced away the pain of their wounds to desperately assist their underlings. They managed to restrain

the enemy's attack and kept the mercenaries in formation. Despite this, a large portion of the mercenaries were already wounded.

Feng Yu shouted, "Quickly, into the cave!"

Nian Bing decided to throw caution to the wind. With great pain, he took out four of his precious magic scrolls. Similar to his Ice and Fire Source attack earlier, but this time it was a fusion of rank 5 spells. The four scrolls combined to form two mighty spells. The fusion was an astonishing sight to see.

In the next instance, two red and blue flowers bloomed at the center of the enemy warriors. It was a magnificent light display that even the sun paled in comparison too, as a violent explosion completely held back the enemies' attack. But Nian Bing was surprised to discover that this rank 7 attack could only at most split their scales and give them shallow wounds, but not threaten their lives.

However, taking advantage of the instant explosion, all the mercenaries rushed into the cave. The strongest mercenaries followed Ka Luo, Feng Nu etc. into the cave, as they continued to battle with the Fire Dragon warriors. After entering the cave, they felt that their backs were safe. Although their opponents were many, all they could do was rush them head-on.

Facing Jin Ni who had been pushed back, Feng Nu spoke calmly. "Elder Jin, tell your kinsmen to step back. As you can see, I am no killer, and I don't want to cause trouble for your esteemed clan. Why is it necessary to meet so bitterly on the battlefield? We will leave the Tian Dang Mountains and keep your secret safe. Isn't

that enough?”

Jin Ni was angry. “You dare enter Lord Dragon’s cave? That is the biggest insult to our Fire Dragon People. Only blood can wash away the dishonor. If you have the dignity of warriors, come out of the cave and fight us fairly.”

A fireball and iceball smashed together, forcing the Dragon People back. Ka Luo’s voice came from behind Feng Nu. “We are mercenaries, not warriors. If you have the ability then come at us. Go out for you to attack us? Only if we were idiots. Be strong everyone. Whether or not we can return alive will depend on us.”

Jin Ni angrily retorted, “Fine. Let us see how long you can hold on before you die. Archers in the trees, destroy those mages first.” He now knew that before those pesky mages were killed, it would be very difficult to breakthrough their defensive line.

On the Yangguang continent, just as Xi La De had told Nian Bing, several humans had taken greater dragons as their totems and become Dragon People. Because of their beliefs in greater dragons, they had become a different species. Fire Dragon People were just one type of dragon person. The Ice Moon Mercenary Group were lucky that although the Fire Dragon People were strong, but they were weaker than other types of Dragon People’s. They only had one martial saint realm elder.

Tens of Fire Dragon People had climbed into the trees outside the cave mouth and were nocking the bows, threatening the mercenaries within.

Jin Ni glared at Feng Nu. “The Phoenix Clan and we Dragon People have always not bothered one another. If you leave now, I will let you go.”

Feng Nu said gravely, “Then I ask you to let all of us go. I will definitely keep the promise I made. If after we leave here someone leaks the whereabouts of the Dragon People, I will take your place and enforce your rule. How about that?”

Jin Ni snorted coldly. “Do you take us for a human city, coming when you will, leaving when you want? I do not care at all about the Phoenix Clan and Dragon People becoming enemies. Since you cannot be reasoned with, don’t blame for being impolite.” While saying this, he waved his hand in front of him. Together, the Dragon People launched a violent attack.

A whistling noise. Dozens of fire arrows descended like shooting stars from the trees, heading straight for Nian Bing and the other mages. These arrows were imbued with fire-attributed qi. Nian Bing and them bodies could not withstand such an attack.

“Water Screen Meets the Heavens.” The only magic scholar Li De showed off his impressive magic power. A screen of blue light appeared, not only completely resolving the fire arrows, but also forcing the opponent’s advance back, reducing the strength of their charge.

Jin Ni did not take part of the battle, instead just watching the mercenaries, while directing his kinsmen’s relentless attack.

The mouth of the cave was too wide. At least half of the mercenaries were needed to guard the whole entrance, while the oncoming attackers were all martial masters. Without Nian Bing and the mages magic support and the mercenaries 120% strength in order to save their life, their defensive line might have been broken much earlier.

“Feng Yun, use an earth spell to seal off the cave a bit,” Nian Bing said anxiously. At this time, the best choice was to narrow the cave mouth. After all, the mercenaries were strong but few. If they could narrow it a bit, Feng Nu and the martial master experts could stay at the front, while the mages supported from the back. At least, there wouldn't be trouble for a period of time.

Feng Yun smiled bitterly. “I tried it already, but the mountain here has a special composition. The earth element is extremely inert; I just can't move it!”

Nian Bing sighed internally. He knew that in this situation wanting to go out would be pure lunacy. “Feng Nu do not be lenient. Otherwise everyone will die here. One killed is one less.”

Feng Nu flashed with light, as the qi around her intensified. Jin Ni noticed this, so he speedily rushed forward before Feng Nu could kill anyone. He used his holy qi to fight against Feng Nu. Though he had the advantage in qi, Feng Nu had the Heavenly Flame Sword. The two people clashed, locked in a draw.

A wind blew gently, ruffling the leaves on the trees. With the

clear air and the lush mountain underfoot it should have been a beautiful scene, but right now an intense battle was going on. Great swordmaster realm warriors were desperately fight against martial masters. The mercenaries became more heavily injured. Long Ling was not attacking the enemy, completely focused on healing the mercenaries. Without control of the earth, earth great mage Feng Yun was useless. He could only blink and observe the ongoing battle. Suddenly, his spirit was jolted. He turn around and ran into the cave. At the moment, everyone was paying attention to the battle, so no one was looking at him.

Li De had a heavy responsibility. He had to defend against the archers in the treetops, which required a sustaining magic for a long time. Although he was a magic scholar, against so many warriors, the amount of time he could keep it up was gradually decreasing.

Out of the four mages, the only one who could assist in the attack now was Nian Bing. Since he left the Peach Blossom Forest, this was the first time he gave it everything he got. Dual wielding the god grade treasures Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh and Flame God's Roar, he was able to cut down enormously on his magic power consumption. He brought the Ice and Fire Source to its limits as red and blue light slammed into the Fire Dragon People one after the other. With his all-out attack, he bought time for Long Ling to heal the injured.

Chapter 62.1 - Wings Of The Fire Phoenix

Boom! A massive explosion. Feng Nu stumbled three steps back, her silver qi turning red again. A trail of blood dripped out of the corner of her mouth; she had received no shallow wound. The Fire Dragon elder was also in not great shape. He bore gashes all over his front; blood continuously dripped out of his wounds. Although he had a fire constitution the Heavenly Flame Sword and Ning Flames Qi pouring into his body definitely would not feel pleasant.

“Ah!” Jin Ni bellowed angrily. His aged body seemed to suddenly to swell with an imposing aura. A ferocious fist came crashing down on Feng Nu, silver qi condensing around it as it shot out like a bullet.

Feng Nu grimaced slightly. She could no longer force her qi to the holy qi realm. She gripped her sword with both hands; now, she could only rely on the superiority of the Heavenly Flame Sword. She mustered up her qi for another attack, but she was not certain she could block the elder.

“No one is allowed to hurt Feng Nu. Hup—” A large figure suddenly leapt out from the side. A massive heavysword slammed into the silver bullet with a smash. A violent explosion of qi forced several of the Dragon People backwards. The one taking the attack for Feng Nu was actually Zi Qing Jian.

Right now, Zi Qing Jian’s body was showing obvious signs of changes. His disheveled hair was dyed red with blood, and his large body seemed to have grown even bigger. As he breathed in deeply, he sounded as hoarse as an Iron-backed Land Dragon. His veins

were popping all over his body. When he took the holy qi attack, his feet actually only sunk into the ground, but he was not forced back at all.

Jin Ni, who had used his most powerful qi, said in surprise. “A berserker? You are actually a berserker?”

No one answered his question. Zi Qing Jian was the only mercenary to leave the cave. His eyes had already turned blood red. In this mysterious state, he seemed to only remember certain people’s names. His giant heavysword was shining with green light that extended the sword by almost a meter. In this state, he appeared to be just as strong as Jin Ni.

Four Dragon People separated to attack Zi Qing Jian from different directions. But in his hands, the heavysword seemed to be a branch as he spun around without flourish. His green qi’s afterimages looked like a wall.

The four incoming shapes flew back faster than they came. However, this time as they were blown back blood spurted wildly. The four dragon warriors had received heavy wounds. Although with the Dragon People’s innate bodies, they did not meet death, they had lost their battle capability.

Zi Qing Jian stood there his red hair, red eyes and unstable green light emitting from his body like a demon god. Enemies on both sides stopped. For a time, he had become the center of attention.

Li De stopped his spell and gasped for breath. His pale face was

evidence of his weakened state. He fell on his butt. He dared not meditate, only fishing out several magic scrolls he had tucked away.

Nian Bing arrived by Feng Nu's side, immediately turning his ice into water to cast a healing spell on her and repair her ruptured meridians. "What is with Big Brother Qing Jian? He seemed to not be conscious. I will go call him back."

"No," Feng Nu stopped Nian Bing. "Right now, no one cannot stop him. He has gone berserk."

"Berserk?" This was the first time Nian Bing had heard such a phrase. "What does berserk mean?"

Feng Nu said in a low voice, "It is a special constitution. Ordinarily there will be one berserker out of every ten thousand. They were a supreme force, particularly in ancient times. After going berserk, warriors are called berserkers, humanity's strongest soldier, as well as the hardest to defend against. That is because after going berserk, the warriors do indeed become the strongest of all warriors, but at the same time, they have a major defect. That is their consciousness falls into insanity just like their bodies. In that situation, they cannot distinguish enemy and foe. Their physical strength reaches its limits, their skin becomes hard as iron. If they use qi their qi will also be several times more powerful. I really did not expect that this friend of yours was actually a berserker. It seems that we may still have a chance to turn this around. It would not even be easy for a martial saint to beat him. I did not want to kill anyone, but now it seems there's no way I can't take action."

“Feng Nu, I know you have your misgivings. If you really do not want to kill anyone, you can just make it so those Fire Dragon People lose their battling capabilities. As long as we can leave here safely its enough.”

Feng Nu nodded. “As Zi Qing Jian attacks you must go all out. Only he or I can deal with that elder, so we still may have a chance.”

“Kill!” roared Zi Qing Jian in fury. In his eyes, the most important enemy was naturally Jin Ni. Subconsciously, the most important people to him were no doubt his little sister and Feng Nu. Just now, Jin Ni was going to harm Feng Nu. Now, Zi Qing Jian suddenly exploded. Naturally, Jin Ni was his first target.

He raised his heavysword. Although Zi Qing Jian was immersed in his berserker state, he had not forgotten about any of his abilities. Instead, he used his skills a lot more smoothly. The skill Zi Meng had used against Feng Nu appeared now, as Zi Qing Jian formed countless silhouettes as he charged at the martial saint ranked Jin Ni.

Feng Nu was about to move when she suddenly caught sight of a black light descending from the sky. No light was there to counter it as it headed straight for Long Ling who was curing the mercenaries. She didn't bother to find out where it was coming from and flashed forward to Long Ling's side. She raised her Heavenly Flame Sword to the sky and batted away the black light.

With a ding! It was actually a black needle. A faint stench filled the air; obviously this needle was poisoned.

“Ah! Why did you save me?” Long Ling had now come to her senses, unable to stop herself from staring at Feng Nu.

Feng Nu’s sharp gaze looked to the direction where the black needle came from, the lush forest nearby, but she could not feel any energy ripples. This definitely was not the attack of the Fire Dragon People. As proud descendents of a dragon bloodline, they definitely would not use poison. While searching for the hidden enemy, she answered, “It’s Nian Bing who wanted me to protect you. You do not need to thank me; if you insist, thank him. You must be careful, there seems to be another enemy here.”

“Thank you, I will be more careful.” Long Ling’s voice was calm, no change from the danger to her life. She continued healing the injured.

Ka Luo had heard what Feng Nu and Nian Bing said earlier. While Zi Qing Jian attacked, he immediately led the mercenaries in a counterattack against the Dragon People. He knew that if could fight back normally, although the enemy were many, there would be a chance for them to fight back.

Zi Qing Jian in berserker mode was just as Feng Nu described. He completely ignited his potential into explosive strength. Even someone of Jin Ni’s caliber felt like he could not beat him for a moment. Currently, he could not dodge Zi Qing Jian, otherwise a calamity would befall his clansmen in his place. Though the Dragon People possessed an innately high defense, a full frontal attack of berserk qi was enough to claim their lives.

The battlefield in completely disarray. Feng Nu finally jumped into the fray, her Heavenly Flame Divine Sword transforming into countless sword images. Every sword image was like a poisonous snake randomly striking. With consecutive flashes, one by one the Fire Dragon People warriors were stabbed. In just a moment, tens of Fire Dragon people warriors had lost their battle capability.

The pressure suddenly subsided. The mercenaries moved under orders, pushing their qi to its limits, following Ka Luo, Jia Te Lin, and Hua Rui in an assault.

Suddenly, countless red lights poured down from the air. They had only one target: Feng Nu. The red lights acted in perfect concert, sealing off Feng Nu's forward passage and forcing her to stop. She used the Heavenly Flame Sword to ward off the arrows imbued in fire qi. The Fire Dragon People took the opportunity to regroup and charge, forcing the mercenaries back into the cave. Now, Feng Nu and Zi Qing Jian were both separated from their surroundings.

Nian Bing sent out several spells to stabilize the situation, pulling Zi Qing Meng back next to Long Ling. At this time, there was a change outside. Jin Ni's whole body swelled with qi and his fist sent Zi Qing Jian barreling backwards. He shouted, "Fire Dragon Soaring Cloud Formation!"

All of the attacking Fire Dragon People immediately treated, and the hundreds of people actually gathered in a strange configuration. An elite troop of 18 Fire Dragon Warriors separated to attack Feng Nu. A long-legged beauty led the attack. Another 18 gathered around Zi Qing Jian. They darted in to attack him from

the sides, but did not face him frontal. Obviously it was to drain his strength.

Fire Dragon People were in a flurry of activity. The warriors who had lost their ability to battle were pulled to the side by their kinsmen. Jin Ni shot silver light from his body, his kinsmen crowding around him as he progressed to the caves. “Bow.” One of his clansmen tossed him a bow. The other fire dragon warriors formed lines of eighteen, slowly approaching the cave.

Although no one was currently attacking them and the pressure had reduced significantly, the mercenaries were more serious than ever. None of them thought they would be killed like this.

Right now, Feng Nu could not use her holy qi. She was fast and powerful, but the team attacking her were in such a bizarre formation. No matter how she would attack, she would be faced with nine enemies. She would dash left and right, but could not break through their lines.

Jin Ni did not lead his kinsmen in a direct attack. Holding the longbow, his sharp gaze focused on Nian Bing. He had found out earlier that the youth relentlessly casting spells was the source of support for all of the mercenaries. As long as he could destroy the mages, their advantage would be much clearer.

Jin Ni’s eyes shone. With his hands on the bow, he had pulled back the bowstring in an instant. Silver holy qi covered the entire longbow, and a strange scene appeared. The silver qi began to transform around his hand, actually turning into a pointed arrow. “Dragon! Guiding! Arrow!” The silver light suddenly burst forth.

Nian Bing could only feel something constrict his chest. The arrow had not quite reached him and he already was having such a violent reaction. Without any hesitation Nian Bing used his strongest Twin Ice Globes to directly receive the arrows. The mercenaries also were not idle. Ka Luo, Jia Te Lin, and Hua Rui took action, wanting to stop the arrow, but because the holy qi had transformed into an arrow in the air, it took a beautiful arc, simply flying over all of their attacks. Its target was still Nian Bing.

Could the Twin Ice Globes block the holy qi arrow? The answer is no of course not. With a giant explosion, the Twin Ice Globes exploded, filling the air with ice powder. The silver arrow went on through, coming within ten meters of Nain Bing. “Careful!” Zi Qing Meng slid forward blazing with green qi. She was prepared to stop Nian Bing’s arrow. The biggest advantage of the Condensed Jade Screen knife technique was its speed. A green screen formed in front of Nian Bing, but it was still not enough. With a ding! The Condensed Jade Screen disappeared. Zi Qing Meng and her short knife were sent flying, just by cutting the side of the arrow. Blood trailed out the corner of her mouth, as despair filled her beautiful eyes.

“No!” Long Ling threw herself in front of Nian Bing, her eyes filled with panic, not because she was faced with a holy qi arrow, but because Nian Bing was in danger. Her whole body shook and Long Ling suddenly felt she was turned around. Next thing you know, a sharp pain was coming from her back. She stumbled forward before righting herself.

Nian Bing faced Long Ling. A bloody hole gaped in his right shoulder. The arrow had gone all the way through. Fortunately because of the several roadblocks in front of it, the Dragon Guiding

Arrow had lots its explosive nature, and the Dense Jade Screen slightly altered its direction. This let Nian Bing avoid a fatal wound. But despite this, the arrow had enough force to shoot clean through his body. Blood poured out. Nian Bing slapped a healing spell onto his shoulders and the bleeding stopped slightly.

“No, this can’t be.” Long Ling’s voice was trembling. The pain in her back had disappeared, as now she realized what had happened. She was standing in front of Nian Bing, but Nian Bing embraced her and turned her to the side. The Dragon Guiding Arrow ran through Nian Bing’s shoulder blade and hit against her back. Now there was only a bit of pain left in her, but no outward wound.

Nian Bing smiled bitterly. “This had to happen. Ling’er, come, your healing is better than mine. Help me stop the blood. This time, it might be hard for us to escape.”

Long Ling hurried over to Nain Bing’s side. She applied a healing spell to Nian Bing’s cup-sized wound, then roughly bandaged his wound with coarsely torn strips of cloth. “The vest, the vest? Yesterday I gave you the vest, why aren’t you wearing it?” Long Ling’s voice was hysterical. “Could it be that you hate even the stuff I give you?”

Chapter 62.2 - Wings Of The Fire Phoenix

“No, stupid Ling’er, did you know? After you gave me your vest yesterday, my heart broke. It was obviously given to you by Teacher! It even had your scent. How could I use a protective treasure that was meant for you? Stupid girl, you are wearing it right now! If not, we could’ve been skewered together.” Yes, yesterday Nian Bing blew the Phoenix Flute to ask Feng Nu to put the vest on her again without her knowing. With Feng Nu’s capabilities, it remained completely hidden. Actually, Nian Bing could have let Feng Nu block the Dragon Guiding Arrow for him and get away with just a slight shock. But as a man, how could he let a woman take an arrow for him? Nian Bing didn’t hesitate and embraced Long Ling, turning them to the side. His protective Ice Wall scroll was his last line of defense, but he still sustained a serious wound.

Long Ling’s heart trembled as she felt the concern from Nian Bing’s warm eyes and pale face. Emotion began to creep into her empty eyes, and she stepped forward to help Nian Bing sit down. She helped Nian Bing sit down, while she straightened up and walked outside. At the moment, Jin Ni was slowly pressing forward with his troops. They injured the most important mage, so they had no more worries. Actually, it only took half a joss stick to burn to reach where they were now, but there had been many changes in the battle. From Feng Nu’s initial rush, to convening in the cage, then the vigorous defense, berserker Zi Qing jian, Feng Nu’s counterattack, Nian Bing’s heavy wound. At almost every moment, there was a massive change on the battlefield.

Without Feng Nu, who could stop Jin Ni? The mercenaries regrouped, their fighting spirit gradually crumbling against the enemy’s onslaught. Anyone knew that this time, they had no

chance of blocking the enemy's charge. Now, Long Ling approached from behind them and chanted quietly, "Take my life as price, curse everything..." just as she chanted this, a large hand suddenly covered her mouth, forcefully cutting off the spell. If she had chanted over half of this spell, it couldn't be stopped, otherwise it would cause a terrible backlash. You could only interrupt the spell at the start.

"Ling'er, this curse spell should be used by me, not you." Nian Bing tugged Long Ling into his embrace, his tone firm.

Nian Bing's warm embrace set Long Ling at ease, despite knowing about the calamity that came ahead. She had no fear. Hugging Long Ling's beautiful form, Nian Bing smiled bitterly. Good thing he came when he did. Just as he was about to chant the same spell Long Ling almost had, a voice dispelled such thoughts.

"Quick, everyone deeper into the cave. It's narrower and better for defense." Feng Yun's voice rang from behind. Nian Bing looked back only to see Feng Yun run out from the inner cave. At this moment, when no one was expecting it, Feng Nu exploded.

If Feng Nu was a bomb, Jin Ni wounding of Nian Bing was the lighting of the fuse. A mournful cry of a phoenix entered everyone's ears like a sharp needle. The red qi around Feng Nu suddenly subsided, In a moment, her long, pink hair turned dark red. Her originally fair skin sparkled with a faint red light. The back of her clothes suddenly tore open and a pair of red-feathered wings unfurled. They curled slightly inward, tightly lined with phoenix plumage, reaching almost two meters in span. Feng Nu's normally lanky body looked positively petite against her wings.

With a single flap, Feng Nu was aloft; her dark blue eyes shone with a gold luster.

Jin Ni couldn't help but lose his composure as he witnessed this. "Careful, it's the Phoenix Clan's Royal Feathers!"

His warning came too late. Red qi circled her as she flapped her wings and pulsed outwards. Every single enemy attacking Feng Nu could not withstand its might; eighteen wounds violently spurted out blood, before being thrown back over thirty meters.

Feng Nu hissed in the air, swinging Heavenly Flame horizontally, emitting red light as it went. A ravine formed in front of the cave as a wave of qi forced all of the Fire Dragon People backwards.

Seeing this situation, Nian Bing wasn't happy but worried. Showing such great strength in danger meant that it might not be her own strength, which made it more likely to have a severe backlash. He hurriedly shouted, "Feng Nu! Bring Zi Qing Jian back! The cave is narrower and better for defense inside!"

The sky was filled with her afterimages. Feng Nu brought Zi Qing Jian aloft in a jiffy by grabbing onto his collar. At the moment, Zi Qing Jian had no control of himself while berserk, unable to tell friend from foe. He suddenly raised his heavysword, slashing at Feng Nu.

"You idiot, it's me." Feng Nu waved her sword, easily stopping Zi Qing Jian's attack. Strangely enough, when berserker Zi Qing Jian heard Feng Nu's voice, he immediately became obedient.

Bzz– Silver holy qi once again appeared in the form of the Dragon Guiding Arrow. This time, its target was the airborne Feng Nu. Jin Ni knew very well that offending the Phoenix Clan’s royalty meant that there was an irreparable gouge between them and the Phoenix Clan. Only by killing Feng Nu and everyone else could he hope to cover everything.

The giant red wings suddenly disappeared. The left wing was waved out horizontally; the Dragon Guiding Arrow that Nian Bing couldn’t even stop while using all of his strength was destroyed by Feng Nu’s giant wink. In the next moment, Feng Nu had arrived at the cave mouth. With a wave of her sword, she sent all of the enemies flying.

Nian Bing grabbed Feng Nu. “Let’s go inside.” At the moment, the mercenaries had quickly ran deep into the cave after seeing Feng Nu stop the enemies. He suddenly cried out an alarm, involuntarily letting go of Feng Nu’s hands. Right now, Feng Nu’s body was as scorching as fire.

A cold light emanated from Feng Nu’s eyes as she glared at Jin Ni holding the longbow. She said coldly, “Today I did not kill anyone, but that doesn’t mean I won’t next time. If you have the ability than come in.” After this, she shielded everyone so they could escape.

Unexpectedly, they actually didn’t chase after them, which may have been because of Feng Nu’s sudden show of such power. They let Feng Nu, Nian Bing and the mercenaries run deeper into the cave.

The mercenaries had withdrawn a hundred meters to the cave, into a three meter wide tunnel until they couldn't hold on. As if paralyzed, they fell to the ground. Even the three leaders of the Ice Moon Mercenary Group had less than a third of their strength left. Although no one had died, two-thirds of them were heavily wounded. They were lucky that Long Ling treated them earlier so they could come this far.

Feng Nu raised her hand and hit Zi Qing Jian into unconsciousness, then threw him to the side. She turned back to peer outside, then let out a breath.

“Why are you hitting my brother?” Zi Qing Meng demanded angrily.

Feng Nu's gold eyes exuded a cold aura that made Zi Qing Meng shiver involuntarily. “He was in a berserker state, I just hit him so he could return to normal. However, although it didn't consume all of his strength, he might have to sleep two days before recovering.”

Nian Bing looked at Feng Nu in concern. “Are you okay?”

Feng Nu shook her head. “I'm fine. You?” Her golden gaze fell on the frightening wound on Nian Bing's shoulder.

At the moment, Nian Bing's facial expression was extremely hard to look at. His heavy blood loss had turned his rosy face into an unnatural white. He said with a bitter smile, “I won't die. But it

seems that my right shoulder blade is broken. I used magic to stop the blood, but we might not have the chance to heal it. Feng Nu, why do you think they're not coming after us? Is it because they are afraid of you?"

Feng Nu shook her head. "No, that shouldn't be it. I just discovered that these Fire Dragon People seem to be afraid of this cave. From the start when I charged to the cave, they deliberately avoided going into the cave. Right now I think that if we had chosen to go in the cave earlier, we might be in much better shape. But at least they won't bother us now."

"Sorry, this is my fault." Ka Luo's solemn voice. "It was my wish to bring everyone into this death trap. If I had listened to Nian Bing's suggestion earlier and abandoned this operation, I wouldn't have involved you in this."

Feng Nu looked at Ka Luo and said indifferently, "You don't need to take responsibility. The ones trapped here are you. With my ability, I can leave here with Nian Bing at any time, but I can at most bring only one person." After saying this, the whole came turned silent. No one doubted Feng Nu's words; she had proved her strength.

"Feng Nu, bring Ling'er with you." Nian Bing's tone was calm, but with unnatural firmness.

Feng Nu, Zi Qing Meng, and Long Ling looked at him in the same time. In a strange voice, Feng Nu asked, "Don't you want to live and leave here?"

Nian Bing looked at his right arm and said indifferently, “No one wants to die, but as a mage, and as a chef, I have already lost my right arm. Even if I could cure it, I cannot use my arm to make food or draw magic scrolls. In my life I had only two goals: to reach the peak of culinary arts and to cultivate my magic to the highest realm to avenge my parents. I have lost my right arm; its recovery uncertain. Why wouldn’t I give the chance to live to someone else? Feng Nu, I cannot hide anything from you at this point. My enemy actually is...” saying this, he suddenly lowered his voice and leaned close to Feng Nu’s ears.

Feng Nu trembled. “What? Your enemy was actually her?”

Nian Bing nodded and smiled painfully. “You rest first and recover your strength, then take Ling’er away with you. If in the future you are confident your abilities surpass that person, then please get my revenge for me, so we weren’t friends in vein. Of course, this is just my request, to only do it if it is possible.”

“No, I will not leave here.” Long Ling spoke while healing.

“Ling’er, don’t be stubborn.” Nian Bing and Li De replied in unison. Both their expressions wore impatient expressions.

Long Ling raised her head and smiled faintly. Her previous spirit had returned to her beautiful face. “I’m not being stubborn! Since we came here together, then we will leave together. If not, I will not leave. The injured need me. Nian Bing, thank you, at least now I know that the person I loved I did not love for naught.”

Nian Bing furrowed his brows resisting the sharp pain coming from his shoulder. “Ling’er don’t forget. Teacher Long Zhi has only one daughter. If something happens to you, what will Teacher do? What will the Association do?”

Long Ling said simply, “If Father was here, he definitely wouldn’t abandon his friends and escape alone.”

Feng Nu said coldly, “Are you talking about me?”

Long Ling shook her head. “Of course not. I don’t have the qualifications to talk about you, no one here does. If it weren’t for you, we would have long since been killed by the Fire Dragon People; it’s you who saved all of our lives. I can see that you’re no ordinary human. I think that you entered the human realm for a mission, so no one will mind if you leave. If you can, take Nian Bing. His injury is very serious, but if he can find light mage magic scholar to use a rank 8 spell, he can recover completely.”

Nian Bing smiled. “Ling’er, let’s not fight. Since you do not want to go, then you can stay here. Anyways, the enemy won’t come in, so we will starve to death here together. I think that we brought enough ingredients to eat for a month. If we can save a little, we can last even longer.”

The red light subsided and Feng Nu returned to her original state. Nian Bing discovered that she was trembling slightly, and rushed over to help her out. Concerned, he asked, “Feng Nu, are you okay?”

Feng Nu shook her head. “I’m fine. Nian Bing, I want to talk to you alone. Can we?”

Nian Bing went blank, then said, “Of course.” Immediately, he supported Feng Nu over to the corner and sat her down. At the same time, he used another spell on his shoulder.

Chapter 63.1 - The Secret Of The Phoenix Clan

“You’ve already seen that I’m not a true human,” Feng Nu said with a sad laugh, her shivering intensifying. Her scorching hot body was now cold.

Nian Bing took Feng Nu into his arms. Feng Nu didn’t resist, leaning against Nian Bing’s left shoulder and feeling the heat of his body. “Nian Bing, how do you know about the existence of the Dragon People?”

At the moment, Nian Bing didn’t care about his own safety. When his right shoulder was pierced by the Dragon Guiding Arrow, he had already threw away all his burdens. Just like he said, even if he left here alive he was a useless person. Not considering, about his parents’ revenge, it was unknown whether he could even take care of himself.

He hugged Feng Nu, like they were lovers. Seeking joy amidst the sorrow. Nian Bing smiled faintly and wrapped another strip of rough cloth around his shoulder. He explained, “I heard about them from Mao Mao’s father...” He elaborated on what happened after he and Feng Nu parted ways in Ice Snow City, how he met Mao Mao as well as her father the dragon summoner Li De.

“So it was like that. No wonder you knew about the Dragon people. Nian Bing, now that we’re here, I have no need to hide anything from you. You should have heard Elder Jin Ni say it already. He’s right, I’m from the Phoenix Clan. Just like the greater dragons, phoenixes were once lived on this continent.

Though, unlike dragons, there is only one phoenix. Or, more accurately, there can only ever be one fire phoenix.

“However, phoenix and dragons are different as phoenixes can never die, existing without limits. However, when Lord Phoenix participated in an ancient war, it received unrecoverable wounds from protecting the humans. Its soul was directly harmed by the attack, so it could not even use its karmic rebirth ability to continue living. Without any other alternative, Lord Phoenix left behind its bloodline to humans. That is to say, my Phoenix Clan are actually humans who possess the pure bloodline of the phoenix.

“The Dragon People and our situation is different. They obtained only an extremely small portion of the dragon’s bloodline, just like iron-backed land dragons. We have superhuman abilities. The Dragon People possess strong defense and attack power, but besides their bodies resembling dragons scales, they don’t have any other part of the dragons’ strength. Dragons are the strongest beings on the whole continent and always have been. How could they give their abilities to humans?

“But our Phoenix Clan are in a different position. What we possess is the true power of the Phoenix. The majority of us, like the Dragon People, inherited only a small portion of the Phoenix’s ability, but an extremely small part of my kinsmen have truly inherited the Phoenix’ bloodline. Through continuous evolution, we could even become true phoenixes. These people are the royalty of the Phoenix Clan.”

Nian Bing inhaled deeply. Compared to Zi La De’s description,

Feng Nu's account was much more succinct and clear. "So you are saying you are part of the royalty of the Phoenix Clan? So the wings on your back were results of your evolution?"

Feng Nu nodded, then sighed lightly. "I really didn't think that the first time I would use the Phoenix's power was actually against the Dragon people. Actually, our Phoenix Clan and the Dragon People have a very good relationship. The ancestor phoenix was the Dragon God's disciple. Although the phoenix's power will never be stronger than a true divine dragon, a phoenix has its own special abilities.

"I'm a member of the phoenix royalty and have a Nine Heavenly Flame Body, but my length of cultivation is too short. Hastily using the Phoenix's power has caused extreme harm to my body. Before I thought that I could bring you with me, but after retracting the Wings of the Phoenix I found that I don't have the strength to leave here. Truly evolving to a phoenix is very difficult. Ever since the ancestor phoenix passed down its bloodline, not a single member of the royalty has successfully achieved the impressive feat of bringing the phoenix to the continent once more."

Nian Bing paused in consideration. "Feng Nu, the True Sun Knife's Flame God's stone is the purest form of fire element. It might be able to assist you in recovering your strength. What conditions are needed for you to become a phoenix? What stage are you in evolution?" While talking, he took out the True Sun Knife and passed it to Feng Nu.

Feng Nu looked at the softly glowing Flame God's Stone. With a faint smile, she replied, "Thank you, Nian Bing. The Phoenix's

power is too mysterious. When the ancestor phoenix passed down its bloodline, it truly died. Even Elder doesn't know how to truly evolve into a phoenix. They just told me to become a true phoenix I must evolve nine times. Every time I evolve, I will possess another one of the Phoenix's ability. When I evolve the final time, I will shed my human body and become a true fire phoenix.

“Right now I have only completed the first evolution. The phoenix wings you saw right now are the second evolution. The greatest genius of my predecessors only managed to complete five evolutions. I never believed that I would be able to reach the highest ninth evolution; I just want to get stronger to protect my clan.

“After all, there are at least seven branches of Dragon People, whereas there is only one Phoenix Clan. Those despicable humans thirst for our blood so they can possess the strength of a Phoenix clansmen. Thus the existence of our Phoenix Clan has become more secretive. I am a royal warrior of the Phoenix Clan, so I need to become stronger to protect my clansmen.

Nian Bing nodded and answered, “So it was like that. Feng Nu, you possess near Martial Saint strength, is that because of the first evolution? If you complete the second evolution, would you regain your previous strength?”

Feng Nu smiled bitterly, “Quit dreaming. The evolution can only increase my abilities, but not my strength. If I want to become stronger, I have to cultivate. Even If I could truly complete the second evolution and completely control the Wings of the Phoenix, I would need a long time of training to use it in battle.

“There’s nothing in this world that can be gained without hard work, even if it’s our Phoenix Clan. The reason why I could use such strength earlier was because I ignited my phoenix blood, but it’s not really part of my strength. So, even though I look fine now, I have lost no less blood than you.

“The Flame God’s Stone will help me increase my strength, but it cannot produce new blood. The Phoenix Clan blood ignition is only a last resort to save our lives since it consumes our vitality. Without three months I won’t be able to recover.

Nian Bing smiled. “It seems we can only stay here and live our lives together. Feng Nu, did you call me out because you wanted to tell me your life’s history before we died?”

Feng Nu rolled her eyes at him. “Of course not. I called you out to discuss how we could survive. Although we’ve already entered the death trap, our chances of escaping aren’t zero.”

Nian Bing’s heart thumped and looked at his surroundings. Although they went several hundred meters into the cave, the cave walls seemed to be extremely special; they were embedded with faint red specks of light, and the fire element here was extremely lively. Using this weak red light, he could manage to make out the things around him. “Feng Nu, do you mean you want to dig a tunnel out of the cave?”

“Quit dreaming. Could it be you haven’t noticed how hard the rock is here? And we’re in the belly of a mountain. Even if we used

Heavenly Flame, True Sun, etc. it would be impossible to dig out of here. I think the reason why it's so warm here must be related to the composition of the mountain. And just food alone will prevent us from holding on. You're smart, can't you think of something else?"

His eyes lit up as he came to a great realization. "Since we can't go out, we should go in deeper. There might be another way out inside. Since we already came in, we should go see our treasure trove."

Feng Nu smiled. "I was thinking the same thing. If my guess isn't wrong, a fire sub-dragon must live inside here, the one Jin Ni called Lord Dragon. Sub-dragons are higher ranked than land dragons, but they aren't true greater dragons. Since there is a sub-dragon here, there must be a way out. Sub-dragons are also called flying dragons. They can fly, but they are very lazy. They sleep for several months at a time. They're close relatives of greater dragons, so Dragon People all search for sub-dragons.

"For them to call it Lord Dragon, this sub-dragon must be extremely strong as well as smart. Although they aren't true dragons, they possess some of the greater dragon's abilities. They cannot be compared to golden-backed land dragon king you spoke of before; they're, at the very least, stronger. But sub-dragons are very big, so they definitely couldn't come out of this narrow cave. Although we're already in deep in the cave, don't you feel the air is very clear? If I am right, that sub-dragon should be asleep in the deepest part of the cave. There should be a large path there to leave the cave. That's the place we want to find."

Nian Bing's eyes shone brightly. If he could, who would want to stay in this accursed place? Moreover, Long Ling had said that a rank 8 light spell could completely heal his wound. If he lived, he had hope! Despite the excitement because of this new plan, he didn't lose his cool. He nodded. "That's good. Let's rest first and recover our strength before going in deeper. As long as we find a path, we can use magic to fly out, and get everyone out of this cave."

She nodded. "Ever since I saw that the Fire Dragon People stopped chasing after us I got this idea, but right now there are some things we need to pay attention too. The most important is that now we absolutely cannot alert the sub-dragon. If we do, even if we were at our optimum state we wouldn't be the sub-dragon's opponent. We would die ugly deaths."

Nian Bing nodded. "You're knowledgeable about dragons. If there is any problem just say it and I will help you. I think that President Ka Luo and them will also cooperate."

Feng Nu said, "Remember what Ka Luo promised you before? He wasn't wrong; the treasure trove really is here. The sub-dragon's intelligence is close to a greater dragon, so it has the same hobbies as a greater dragon. That is, collecting precious items. Since this is a sub-dragon's lair, that treasure trove is possibly larger than I imagined. The sub-dragon sleeps very deeply, but if someone dares touch its treasure, even if it's just one gold coin, it'll immediately wake up."

Nian Bing was dumbfounded. "No way, dragons are so greedy?"

A smile spread across her face. “Dragons have had the nickname ‘misers’ since forever, this isn’t strange at all. So if we want to leave here alive, no one can touch the treasures. Otherwise, everyone will die. Sub-dragons will never show mercy on anyone who dares infringe on their belongings. Those mercenaries I don’t know very well. Enough to stand against a common enemy when faced with a shared enemy, but in case we are faced with the lure of the treasure, whether or not they can resist touching it will affect us. Do you get what I am saying?”

He nodded. “You are afraid someone will try to profit from this. Your worry is completely reasonable. Not just them, if I saw a magic book that I really needed, I might not be able to stop myself.”

She giggled. “So you would become greedy?”

He squeezed Feng Nu and closed his eyes. “I just want to be like this forever. Feng Nu, I feel that my time of freedom won’t last too long. If I could live here, I would probably be able to have a choice in my feelings.”

Feng Nu fell silent. After a long time, she said, “I know. Actually, yesterday night your expression told me a lot. She really is a good girl. For her to treat you that way, she is truly worthy of your love. I congratulate you.”

Nian Bing didn’t say anything. When he learned of Feng Nu’s identity, he truly understood just how different their worlds were. He didn’t want to hurt Long Ling any more, so now he could only treasure his last moments with Feng Nu.

Outside the cave. Jin Ni let one of his kinsmen help him apply medicine to his wound.

“Elder, are we just going to wait here?” asked one of the Fire Dragon People warriors.

Jin Ni’s expression was somewhat pained. The strength of the mercenaries were outside of his expectations, especially Feng Nu and the berserker Zi Qing Jian. If not for them, they would already be buried here.

Chapter 63.2 - The Secret Of The Phoenix Clan

Seeing his clansmen's look, Jin Ni said coldly, "Could it be you have forgotten Lord Dragon's orders? Without his permission, no one can enter the Fire Dragon Cave."

"But, what will we do if those humans wake up Lord Dragon from his slumber? He might blame us."

Jin Ni's eyes flashed with a cold life. "If they're smart, they won't do that. What's more, they have a Phoenix Clan's clan member with them; she wouldn't allow them. You will bring a hundred people to the mountain peak. If they try to leave through there, you know what to do. Although there are two entrances to the Fire Dragon Cave, they won't have a chance. We'll just let them die here. Just see who long they can last. If they really wake up Lord Dragon, then I will grieve for them. Even if Lord Dragon blames us, it won't be too serious. We can just prepare more of his favorite snow fish jerky to please him."

"No good, Elder. Our seriously injured brothers almost died," reported a Fire Dragon Person running in.

"What? How's that possible? They were heavy wounds, but they can still recover from them. They can't die." Jin Ni got to his feet which disturbed his wound, and his expression turned ugly.

"Elder, it's poison. It seems they were injected with a poison extremely toxic to Dragon People. Our brothers are turning black

and dying. It must be that woman from the Phoenix Clan. Her sword must have been covered in poison.”

Jin Ni shook all over. Though they were opponents, he had a good impression of Feng Nu. Not because of Feng Nu’s beauty, but because she had been lenient when they fought. Even at the very end, when she was extremely angry, she didn’t kill anyone.

“No, it’s definitely not her. In her state of the Phoenix Body Transformation she wouldn’t need poison to kill us. Let’s go, bring me there.” Jin Ni followed the clansmen into the forest. He wasn’t paying attention, but the instant he entered the forest a indiscernible black figure disappeared into the cave.

After some time, the hearts of the mercenaries gradually settled. Li De, Feng Yun, and Long Ling took out food and water for everyone from their space rings, then took a detailed inventory. All thirty-nine people except for Long Ling, Li De, and Feng Yun received wounds, twenty-three of them had serious wounds. The majority could only manage to move, but luckily no one died.

Nian Bing and Feng Nu rejoined the rest of the group. With Long Ling’s help, he treated his wounded shoulder. Li De used half a day’s worth of accreted magic power to cast a rank 7 water healing spell, which lessened Nian Bing’s pain. However, the most it could do was knit the open wound closed; the shattered bone and meridians remained unfixed. But in their current situation, in this cave, there was nothing they could do.

Nian Bing told Feng Nu’s speculations about going deeper cave to Ka Luo, Jia Te Lin, Hua Rui, and Li De. When they heard about the

possibility of escape, everyone got excited.

Ka Luo asked hesitantly, “Nian Bing, what if we took that bottle? After all that’s the thing the employer wants and we’re already here–”

Nian Bing cut off Ka Luo and said tersely, “We have no time for that. You still care about that? Leaving with our lives is the most fortunate thing that could happen for us. We can only live if you abandon all covetous thoughts. Could it be that those objects are more important than our lives?”

Ka Luo sighed and nodded. “All right. This is how it is, I’ll stop my subordinates.”

Nian Bing frowned. From Ka Luo’s tone he couldn’t sense any resoluteness. He was already here and still having these thoughts? At the moment, for the first time he felt that it was reasonable that the mercenary association was regarded as low-tier.

“If someone has any plans on making moves on items, I won’t be polite. In order to survive, I do not mind killing anyone.” Feng Nu carried her Heavenly Flame Sword as she walked over slowly. Her shivering disappeared; Nian Bing’s True Sun Knife was secured in her chest. With the Flame God’s Roar, after a short period of rest she had recovered most of her qi.

With Feng Nu’s appearance, Ka Luo’s expression immediately became somewhat embarrassed. “Miss Feng Nu, please do not misunderstand. I’ll definitely restrain my subordinates; this you

do not need to worry about. We don't want to be buried here!"

Feng Nu nodded. "That's good, for everyone's life."

After a discussion, everyone agreed on resting for several days, at least until their injuries had recovered a bit. Anyways, they had plenty of food and water. It would be easier to escape alive if they were in better condition.

Because of Nian Bing's heavy wound, Zi Qing Meng replaced him as the mercenary group's chef. However, she couldn't produce fire so Nian Bing had to help. The sky outside was dark, for the mercenaries, dinner was their greatest enjoyment.

Nian Bing drew Zi Qing Meng away to a deeper part of the cave, to what looked like a rock room. Nian Bing smiled bitterly. "There is nothing to burn here, so we can only use magic. Miss Zi, I'll be troubling you."

Zi Qing Meng sighed. "There's no trouble. We've survived till now; let's get out of here alive first before speaking." While speaking, she stabbed several warriors' swords into the ground. Nian Bing took out his iron pot from his space ring, and Zi Qing Meng balanced it on top of the swords. Nian Bing took out a board and laid it on the ground, then many ingredients and seasonings. It turned into a simple kitchen.

"Miss Zi, be honest. Do you regret coming with me and the mercenaries' expedition?"

Zi Qing Meng gave Nian Bing a look. “If I said no, I would definitely be lying. But there is no use for regret. We have to leave here first of all. And no need to call me Miss Zi; call me Qing Meng. Didn’t you say that we were always friends?”

Nian Bing felt somewhat overwhelmed. “How rare! Normally I never see you be polite.”

Zi Qing Meng snorted. “I really hate your arrogance and fickleness.”

“Arrogance? Me? Fickle? Those aren’t words to describe me.” Nian Bing was trying his hardest to forget about the wound in his right arm as his words were light, like they weren’t in a critical situation.

“What do you mean you have none? Before you came to the college, I was always the youngest, the most talented chef. But when you came you sent everything into disorder. Your culinary skills could even defeat Uncle’s. Although you’re always smiling, you can’t conceal your arrogance. As for fickle, did you see how you have two girls? Isn’t that fickle?”

Nian Bing shook his head helplessly and sat down next to the iron pot. “Think what you like. Today you’re the main chef. I believe that the food you will make will definitely be good. Everybody’s injured, so you should make easily digestible noodles. I have a sack of flour here; I’ll let you prepare it.”

Zi Qing Meng watched nian Bing take out a sack of flour from his

space ring. She couldn't hide her smile. "You mages are full of disadvantages, but sometimes you have advantages mercenaries cannot compare in. Let's work together. It's so sad that you're injured, otherwise you could have used Separating Tendons and Bones as the Hand Wishes. Then we definitely could make delicious noodles."

Nian Bing's expression was dark. "Even if my wound was cured, I don't know if I could use As the Hand Wishes. Right now, I have no feeling in my right shoulder. Do you think I could still knead dough?"

Zi Qing Meng said dimly, "Sorry, I..."

Nian Bing shook his head. "A real man can raise it up and put it down. Everything is like that. Relax, I'm fine. Let's begin, so everyone won't wait too long."

Although everything in the cave was simple and crude, Nian Bing had prepared very thoroughly and worked very well for their purposes. Nian Bing leaned against the wall. Now that he couldn't move, watching other people make food was an enjoyment for him. He cast a low-rank fireball to light up the cave and watched Zi Qing Meng expertly knead the dough. Her movements were just like Zi Xiu's during their competition, but the level of familiarity and strength of her grip were much worse.

"Qing Meng, did you learn the Heavy Eagle Hand?" Nian Bing asked with interest.

Zi Qing Meng nodded. “It’s one of the top techniques in the culinary world; of course I learned it. Sadly, Uncle said I’m a woman, so I naturally have a problem with executing the Heavy Eagle Hand because of poor grip. So even though I practiced it for a long time, I can’t capture its essence.”

Nian Bing smiled. “It’s good for a girl to learn cooking. You’ll definitely marry a good man in the future.”

Zi Qing Meng blushed. “You really aren’t honest with your words. Rest for a moment. I’ll call you when I need to boil the water.”

Nian Bing answered, “En!” and closed his eyes. He kept up his flame spell while entering meditation. His body was really too weak.

Soon the kneading was complete. Zi Qing Meng made the noodles very simply; she kneaded the dough into a ball, then used her knife to cut it. Previously, Nian Bing had put a big block of ice into his pot. In order to save magic power, he didn’t use a flame spell to melt it and instead let it just melt with time.

Zi Qing Meng put the dough on the kneading board, her eyes turning to Nian Bing. She was about to ask him to start a fire but found him breathing very evenly like he was asleep. The present Nian Bing looked as handsome as ever. His weakness didn’t affect his personality, but instead gave him an air of melancholy. Zi Qing Meng’s heart clenched and she sighed lightly, but she could not bring herself to wake him up. Looking around, she suddenly had a brilliant idea. She used the weapons she brought before to create a

framework around Nian Bing's flame spell and placed a small pot on top. She had created a makeshift stove.

Zi Qing Meng giggled and thought, This is a very interesting stove! Without much hesitation, she put oil and the dough and started to stew it. As she added ingredients, the pungent aroma filled the entire cave. Not long later, Zi Qing Meng felt very pleased. It seemed that her culinary skills didn't decline in the least.

From the pot she scooped out some of the melted ice water to thoroughly wash her knife. In the battle before, her knife had been soaked through with blood. Right now she couldn't help but smile bitterly. A kitchen knife wasn't meant to be used as a weapon. Fortunately, they were in a time of crisis. If not she wondered what people would think of her using a knife to prepare food that she used to cut people.

"Smells good, smells really good," said someone behind her, frightening Zi Qing Meng. She turned around to look, but did not see anyone. Everything was the same as before.

"Hmph, so you want to scare me." She walked over to Nian Bing and lightly kicked his leg. "Hey, quit pretending. I know you're awake."

Nian Bing awoke from his meditation. He had felt really tired after entering his meditative state, so much so that he actually fell asleep. Fortunately, he was still able to keep up the flame spell and didn't extinguish it. Rubbing his eyes, he said, "You finished kneading the dough? Then you should start stewing it."

“Stop it with the faking. You suddenly spoke and scared me. Don’t you know you scared the life out of me?” Zi Qing Meng looked at him with dissatisfaction.

“Me? I didn’t say anything. You definitely were hearing things,” Nian Bing said, mystified.

Zi Qing Meng frowned. “There’s no one here except you and me. If it wasn’t you, then was I talking to a ghost?”

Nian Bing said helplessly, “You really heard my voice?”

Zi Qing Meng thought about it. “It was you using a funny voice to scare me. It seemed to be a lot rougher than your normal voice.”

Nian Bing shook his head. “All right, let’s just take it as me scaring you. Hurry up and make food. Ah, you stewed it well. It smells really good, this is true stewed eggplant noodles. Really good. If I make it, I might not be able to make it at your level!”

At Nian Bing’s praise, Zi Qing Meng couldn’t help but forget her previous displeasure. Smiling, she said, “Stop it you. Heat the water; let’s cook some noodles.”

With Nian Bing’s a help, the pot of noodles were made well. Without eating them, you could smell the drool worthy aroma. Zi Qing Meng was only a swordmaster level warrior, but carrying the big and small pots were no problem for her. The two people

traveled back the way they came to deliver the mercenaries' food.

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However, what they didn't find out is just as they left, the sound of someone swallowing their saliva came from deeper within the cave. Mixed in was an angry voice. "Fuck, why is this cave so small. It's smell so good, soooo goood. Never mind, I'll just go back to sleep. Those tiny insects' food cannot be that delicious. Right, it's definitely horrible. Sleep, must sleep..."

After resting for three days, everyone's injuries were much improved. Nian Bing's gash had been healed, but for him this was nothing good. His bones had been broken. Being healed on the surface didn't mean much. This arm was useless for him. On a happier note, Zi Qing Jian woke. Because he hadn't exhausted all of his strength, he was still as lively as a dragon and animated as a tiger after recovering.

"President Ka Luo, I think that we should go into the cave to investigate the way first. The injured people should stay here to rest. After we've found the way out, we can come back and take them," Nian Bing said.

Ka Luo nodded. "Nian Bing, your injuries aren't light. You should stay here. Us and Miss Feng Nu should be sufficient."

Nian Bing shook his head. "I'm fine. I still have many scrolls with me. I might be able to help you. Teacher Li De, how much of your magic power has recovered?"

Li De, “I’ve already completely recovered. I will go with you. We must look after one another.”

Through discussion, it was decided that Feng Nu, Zi Qing Jian, Ka Luo, Jia Te Lin, and Li De would search for the away out. Everyone else would wait here for news.

Leaving the majority of the things there, Nian Bing and the other five set out. Feng Nu walked at the very front, followed by Zi Qing Jian. Nian Bing walked at the very back due to his injury, but used a flame spell to light the way. Before setting out, Nian Bing asked Feng Nu about her injuries. Feng Nu told him she recovered about fifty percent, but the damage to her qi was very severe. Without several months she couldn’t completely recover.

The cavern was truly deep, alternating between becoming suddenly big and suddenly deep. At the smallest point they had to bend at the waist to pass through. The majority of it was easily passable for the six. The deeper they went, the hotter it got. Fortunately, the ventilation was good in this cave. Although it was hot, it wasn’t unbearable.

After walking for an hour, the cave in front of them was still unfathomably deep. Feng Nu turned to look at Nian Bing at the very back. Nian Bing nodded at her, indicating he was fine. Right at this moment, they suddenly found there was a bend in the cave. Beyond the bend, there seemed to be a bright light.

They exchanged glances while increasing their vigilance. Nian Bing pulled out Heavenly Flame, Zi Qing Jian plucked his heavysword off his back, Nian Bing and Li De chanted their best

spells in preparation.

As they went around the bend, a massive change appeared before them. The six people gasped in surprise almost simultaneously, completely stopping in their tracks.

Before their eyes was an indescribably humongous cave. Natural light filtered in from above. From what they could see, the giant cavern seemed to be almost three thousand meters high, a completely hollow mountain. The wide space could easily fit ten thousand people. What surprised them even more were the two mountains in front of them. One of them was a sparkling, glittering mountain of treasure while the other was a giant beast in the shape of a mountain.

The glittering mountain of treasure was thirty-five meters high. Every piece of treasure shone bright as the sky. Every kind of precious gem was present, as well all sorts of bizarre items. There even seemed to be some superb weapons. What attracted Nian Bing the most was a small box encrusted with jewels. From what he learned at the library, it was used to hold books. If Ka Luo's informant wasn't wrong, it might be the ancient magic books he desperately wanted.

Ka Luo swallowed a mouthful of spit and murmured, "Heavens! This treasure trove must be comparable to any country's royal treasury. Fortunately we didn't bring Hua Rui here; she wouldn't be able to stop herself."

Nian Bing walked next to Feng Nu and said quietly, "This, this really is a sub-dragon? Why does it look just like a greater

dragon?”

Feng Nu forced a smile. “See if our luck isn’t bad. You didn’t speak wrongly. This is definitely a greater dragon, a fire greater dragon.”

Although Nian Bing had secretly guessed as much, he couldn’t stop himself from trembling. His eyes suddenly exuded surprise. The gigantic body next to the mountain of treasure was exactly same as the wind greater dragon he saw before, only it was much bigger and its scales were red. It was thirty-five meters long. Its giant wings were drooping onto the floor and covering its body. On its head were a pair of deer horns. At the corners of its mouth it had whiskers, and on its forehead was a red gem. Its whole body was covered in red-gold scales. Although its eyes were closed, its fearsome presence told everyone that this was an extremely mighty being. The ones the Fire Dragon People called Lord Dragon wasn’t a sub-dragon, but a true fire greater dragon. This fact filled Nian Bing with fear.

“Feng Nu, what should we do now?” Nian Bing turned to the beautiful girl beside him.

Feng Nu smiled lightly and pointed upwards. “There should be a way out. Of course we can leave.”

Nian Bing went blank. “You don’t seem to be worried?”

Feng Nu smiled. “What’s there to worry about. A true greater dragon loves to sleep more than a sub-dragon. As long as we don’t

touch its treasure we won't attract its attention. Even if we shout loudly it won't wake up. Our luck is pretty good. Relax, for us a true greater dragon is less dangerous than a sub-dragon. Of course, that's only if it doesn't wake up. I'll remind you again that no one can touch the treasures. Otherwise the dragon will kill us, more easily than crushing an ant."

Ka Luo saw Feng Nu look at him, and hurried to say, "As you can see it's a true greater dragon. This was a pretty good experience for us. Despite your lack of worry, I definitely don't have any thoughts of disturbing its treasure. I have lived many years, but it won't be weird for me to live another twenty. I do want to become old. What should we do now? We should think of a way to get out."

Nian Bing said, "I'll go out first. However, this cave is much higher than we imagined. It might not be easy to find a long enough rope. Feng Nu, my magic should be enough to carry two people out. After we go out we can think of something."

Feng Nu nodded. Nian Bing was just about to use the snowstorm spell when something strange happened. A black shadow, with speed invisible to the naked eye, charged out to the pile of glittering treasure. With a bang, the treasures were sent flying into the air. The black shadow snatched something within, a black bottle, and laughed strangely. "Haha, thank you idiots for opening the path for me and becoming my scapegoat."

Nian Bing and them were about to respond, only to see a person cloaked in black. He couldn't see his face, as his whole person was wrapped in a black mist. Li De's eyes shone, "A darkness attributed mage!"

An angry roar suddenly shook the cave; the fire greater dragon issued an incomparably angry roar after it flew onto the ground. “Whoever dares touch my treasures must die.” A dark red light shot out from its raised claw, shooting straight at the black-clothed person.

The black-clothed person didn’t dare take it head on. He surrounded himself with a black mist, and floated to the side like a leaf in the wind. With a gigantic sound, a 10 meter hole appeared in the firm cave wall. The entire cave jumped in temperature, even vaporizing the fragments from the wall. The site of explosion was glowing darkly.

“You go ahead and play with each other, but I won’t.” The gloomy and cold voice was full of excitement. He ripped apart a scroll and a hexagram appeared below his feet. In a flash of light, he disappeared entirely, not even leaving a scent behind.

Nian Bing and Li De took in a breath of cold air. Because they both knew that the scroll the opponent had used was actually the rank 10 spatial magic scroll–Distant Summons that supposedly didn’t exist. Nian Bing read a description of Distant Summons back on the top floor of the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association Library. It was acclaimed as the greatest escape scroll in the world. It’s just that this scroll couldn’t be made by a magister. Not to mention, there no space magisters on the entire continent.

This scroll could be used to instantly travel over a thousand miles to where a magic array was drawn. If there was a space magister, he would need need to chant the incantation for at least the time it

took to eat a meal, and use all of his magic power to have even a chance at success. Such a precious scroll couldn't be described in value.

The six people stood there dumbly. Right now, they were not thinking about where that black-clothed person had come from or why they had done so. They were rather preoccupied by a fully upright, furious fire greater dragon.

The gigantic figure stood there like a mountain. Its giant wings were almost thirty-five meters wide. Fire came out of its mouth as it it breathed, and dark red eyes exhibited intense anger. They hadn't seen its attack just now. Even at her optimum state, Feng Nu wouldn't be able to stop it. Faced with one of the mightiest beings on the continent, the six people were faced with certain death. Exchanging glances with the greater dragon, for the time they didn't what they should do.

Still, Nian Bing responded most quickly. With cough, he probed, "Honorable Greater Dragon, w-we are not companions of that thief. If there is nothing else, we didn't disturb your slumber."

The greater dragon lowered its head slightly. "Despicable humans, you are talking to me? But that person just said it was you who brought him here. What's more, he stole Modas' sealed bottle that I was guarding. This is all of your fault. How about this? I will give you one chance. If you can damage one of my scales, I will let you leave here alive."

"Then I'll give it my all. My retracted head is a sword, my extending head is also a sword," Zi Qing Jian bellowed angrily. He

waved his heavysword at the greater dragon's body. Ka Luo exhaled silently, then together with Jia Te Lin followed Zi Qing Jian forward. Li De also launched the Water Dragon spell he prepared beforehand. Now, they had only one chance.

“Don't do it!” Feng Nu interrupted Nian Bing who was about to cast his magic. The fire-red silhouette suddenly appeared in front of the greater dragon, the Heavenly Flame Sword turning into a gorgeous display. She first sent Zi Qing Jian, Ka Luo, and Jia Te Lin backwards, before turning to Li De's rank 8 attack spell. The Heavenly Flame Sword's dance had not a single flaw for fear that she would miss something.

The spell was under Li De's control. Because of how Feng Nu had saved everyone so bravely before, Nian Bing believed her very much. When the Water Dragon spells was about to come in contact with her, he immediately drew it back. Despite this, the weakened Feng Nu still coughed out a mouthful of blood, staggering and almost falling over.

Nian Bing ran over to support Feng Nu. “Feng Nu, this was your doing?”

Feng Nu took in several breaths. “I just saved your lives.” She turned around and faced the greater dragon and said coldly, “I really did not think that someone as powerful as you would use such tricks to deceive us.”

The fire greater dragon snorted. “You're that rotten little bird's descendant. No wonder you know the rules.”

Feng Nu calmly looked at the fire greater dragon. “So it was true. It was just my speculation, but just now you confirmed it. The Dragon God left you seven greater dragons to guard the human realm. In order to prevent the balance in the human worlds being altered, he set some rules. Unless humans attack you first or steal your treasures, you are not allowed to attack humans. You obviously knew that the black bottle being stolen wasn’t our fault and were trying to trick us into attacking you first because you wanted to kill us.”

When he heard this, Li De and them knew that their lives were saved by Feng Nu. If Feng Nu hadn’t risked the danger of injury to stop their attack, they might have already been annihilated by that extremely concentrated fire counterattack.

“Don’t call me a greater dragon. I am a dragon king, the mighty fire dragon king, Salamandhys. You’re very smart, but do you think you can escape with your lives? Modas’ sealed bottle was stolen; if the Dragon God knew, I would ignite his anger. Although I can’t kill you directly, I can trap you here. It’s very easy for you to starve. Don’t think I won’t know if I’m sleeping; I know about the fight you had with my servants. You came here for my treasure, but abandoned it to leave. Obviously, you are despicable humans, so taking your lives is the best choice.”

Nian Bing propped up Feng Nu and said clearly, “Salamandhys, although I don’t know what kind of thing Modas’ sealed bottle is, I think that it must be very important to you. If we help you get back your bottle, will you let us go?”

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“Find it and bring it back? Rely on you? That bastard was obviously one of the remaining survivors of dark mages. With your abilities, even all of you together couldn’t match him. Let alone bringing it back. If you meet, the ones to die will probably be you. That’s right, you aren’t allowed to directly say my name, you have to add “The mighty” in front of it.” Salamandhys’ tone showed its dissatisfaction.

Nian Bing said calmly. “Okay, Mighty Salamandhys, I just wanted to tell you that the human’s greatest specialty is creation. Perhaps now we aren’t that person’s enemy, but it doesn’t mean we can’t in the future. As long as you give us time, we can definitely return your item. This, I swear.” As long as he could leave here alive, he would swear anything.

Salamandhys bellowed angrily. “Humans.. I have lived tens of thousands of years, you think your puny trick can fool me? Your humans vows are so plentiful yet worth nothing. That’s fine. I don’t need to kill you. If you can bring something of equal value for your lives, I will let you go, and I’ll stop my servants from stopping you.” While saying this, it lifted his claw and pinched them together.

Nian Bing rubbed his eyes. Inwardly, he thought, I didn’t see wrong. How could this dragon be so indecent; nothing like the wind greater dragon Khaldrhys I saw before. If they died, wouldn’t everything of theirs be his? Why is he doing this? What does he want to take from us?

He exchanged glances with Feng Nu, then asked, “What would you like?”

Salamandhys sat its giant body back down, reducing the pressure on Nian Bing and them by a lot. “That is, I don’t want too much. Like that lousy bird’s descendant’s sword is enough for her life. Everyone needs to bring out such a treasure and I will let you leave. However, don’t think you can use some rotten trash to deceive me. I, the might Salamandhys, cannot be fooled.”

Feng Nu said angrily, “You’re blatantly extorting us? Are all dragons like you?”

Salamandhys flapped his eyelids. “What, you think I’m losing too much of the dragons’ face? Hmph, let me tell you, for these last millennia I have wanted to return the divine realm. I was assigned here by the Dragon God. It’s very fair for you to trade your lives with things. This is the rules I have set; you have no right to protest.”

Hearing Salamandhys say this, Nian Bing became resolute. He held Feng Nu’s hand and stopped her from arguing. With a calm smile, he said, “Then we shall exchange items for our lives. I will trade all of my best items for the lives of my companions.” While saying this, he opened up his space ring, taking out the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Sigh, the Flame God’s Roar, as well as the Free Wind’s Gentle Hymn and the Holy Light Stone. Immediately, the treasures in front of him glowed, and Salamandhys’ stared wide-eyed with greed.

“Good, good. These are good enough for trade. Go ahead and call your companions.”

Ka Luo’s body shook slightly. “Nian Bing, you are the ones helping us this time. How could we let you use your items to save us? Moreover, these kinds of things must be hard for you to part with!”

Nian Bing raised a hand to stop his protest. “President Ka Luo, no need to say anything. Living is the most important thing. Any item is just that. A thing. I must trouble you to call everyone else.”

Ka Luo looked at Nian Bing. He suddenly found that Nian Bing seemed to have grown bigger. Nian Bing at the moment was at war with himself. The Free Wind’s Gentle Hymn and the Holy Light Stone were very precious, but they were just things to him. But the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Sigh and the Flame God’s Roar were the only things left to him by his parents. How could he be willing?

However, for this avaricious dragon, Nian Bing knew that if he didn’t take out enough stuff, they wouldn’t be able to leave here. Ka Luo and the mercenaries he didn’t really care about, but Feng Nu and Long Ling—he couldn’t be indifferent. What’s more, this dragon who had lived for millennia was extorting him. Perhaps he already knew everything he owned, so it would be better for him to take it out of his own volition. Nian Bing pledged silently that if he lived, he would find away to take back his things one day.

Salamandhys waved his claw. Nian Bing took out all of his stuff and laid it front of it. It used its claws to pinch the Flame God’s Roar and praised, “This is good, really good. Such a good thing is

something only the Mighty Salamandhys can use.”

Feng Nu’s hand that was gripping Heavenly Flame turned white. Nian Bing hugged her waist with his left arm and squeezed her lightly, indicating not to charge. They had already taken out their stuff. As long as they could leave here alive, they would pay any price.

After a moment, ZI Qing Meng, Long Ling, and the rest of the mercenaries were led here by Ka Luo. When they saw the mountain of treasure, Hua Rui’s eyes shone. She was about to pick when up, when she was hit backwards by Ka Luo. Ka Luo said angrily, “Whatever the occasion, you never change your greediness.”

Hua Rui stared blankly. When she saw the fire greater dragon Salamandhys’ massive body, she immediately fell silent.

Nian Bing coughed. “Mighty Salamandhys, we have gathered our things. Now we can leave.”

Salamandhys lazily looked at Nian Bing. “Okay, you and that lousy bird’s descendant can leave. Of course, she must leave her sword here. As for the others, they will die here.”

The buzzing in Nian Bing’s head almost exploded. “What are you saying? Someone as mighty as you would speak worthless words?”

Salamandhys said, hurt, “How could the my mighty words be

worthless? I just said you could use these things to exchange for your lives; I didn't promise everyone's lives, just yours."

Nian Bing's breath was quite ragged. "Salamandhys, even if we could exchange items for alive, I only have at most four items. With Feng Nu's sword, we can only leave here with five people."

"No, no, no. Do not be mistaken, I decide what can be exchanged. If you don't want to leave, then you can stay with them and wait for death. I'm not opposed to it." Salamandhys was as sinister as a criminal.

Feng Nu was furious. "I'll fight you to the death.

"Fight me? If you were that lousy bird it would be possible. But you? Much too inexperienced. I didn't say that the other people couldn't leave, but you need to exchange stuff. I, the mighty Salamandhys, have only two hobbies. One is to collect treasures and the other, hehe, is to eat. If you have something delicious to eat in exchange, I can probably think it over. Of course, it must be more delicious than this." He waved his claw, and a giant piece of fish jerky came out from who knows where and landed in its mouth.

A sudden transformation. Nian Bing didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Eating, that was his specialty!

"Ah! It's you, the voice from that day was yours," Zi Qing Meng suddenly exclaimed.

Salamandhys chuckled. “That’s right, this girl’s memory is very good. That day, the thing you made called noodles smelled really good. I wonder how they would taste. That’s good, make me something to eat first for me to try. If you can satisfy me, if you stay behind to cook for me, I’ll let the others go free.”

Nian Bing suddenly thought of a strange idea. This Salamandhys was being so hard on them, could it be because he wanted to keep Zi Qing Meng who could cook behind? If that was so, this was a much easier problem to solve. Armed with this nugget of wisdom, Nian Bing immediately calmed down. “O mighty Salamandhys, us human’s foods are the most delicious in the world. Much better than that fish jerky you eat. I’m a human chef. If you want, I will happily work hard for you.”

Salamandhys’ eyes flashed. He was already tired of his fish jerky. Just as Nian Bing had determined, these lives weren’t important to him; the important thing was eating delicious food. “You can cook? That’s good. Make some for me to try. But if you make delicious enough food, others can leave but you must stay.”

Hearing him say this, Nian Bing couldn’t help but find it funny. There was a saying that said ‘asking a tiger for his skin’. Right now, it was more like ‘asking a dragon for his skin.’

“Nian Bing, I’ll do it.” Zi Qing Meng stepped up next to Nian Bing, her gaze resolute.

Nian Bing shook his head. “No, how could your skills possibly satisfy the mighty Salamandhys?” Everyone had their weak points, dragons were no exception. Since he had found Salamandhys’

Nian Bing was confident.

Salamandhys eyes sparkled as he looked at Nian Bing, “Only saying it is useless. You have to make it for me to try. If you can satisfy me, I’ll let your friends go.”

“Nian Bing.” Feng Nu tried to stop him.

Nian Bing smiled. “Don’t worry, it’ll be fine. Don’t tell me you do not believe in my culinary skills?”

“But...”

Nian Bing’s gaze stopped on Feng Nu. He shook his head, signaling she shouldn’t say anything. He looked back at Salamandhys and sighed. “Mighty Salamandhys, you are always sleeping here, so you might not necessarily have knowledge of the outside world. I am known as the Magic Chef of Ice and Fire in the human realm. Perhaps my magic cannot enter your vision, but it can if I use it to make food.”

“Use magic to cook?” Salamandhys was already quite impatient. He stood up, sticking his head right in front of Nian Bing. “Then what are you waiting for? Make me something to eat.”

Nian Bing smiled inwardly. A greater dragon that loves to eat! He made a pained expression. “Mighty Salamandhys, I truly am sorry. Even with my culinary arts, I’m not certain that I can satisfy you because my right shoulder was broken by your servants. My bone

and tendons were shattered. An arm is the lifeblood of us chefs! Without my right arm, how could I make something to satisfy you?” Nian Bing made an expression of supreme sorrow, like he was truly so full of regret that he couldn’t make food for Salamandhys.

All of Feng Nu’s worry disappeared. Seeing Nian Bing’s face she almost laughed. He had played Salamandhys’ heart perfectly. The most outstanding thing was that everything he said was true.

Salamandhys looked at Nian Bing’s limply hanging right arm. “Your tendons and bones were shattered? Oh, that must be that fellow Jin Ni’s Dragon Guiding Arrow.”

Nian Bing nodded. He lamented, “Ah, I courted this disaster myself, but I still need my right hand to make you food. But without a rank 9 light healing spell, my arm will never be able to recover! Mighty Salamandhys, do you have any medicine I could use to cure it? As long as my arm is well, I will immediately make you a delicious meal.”

As a greater dragon, Salamandhys no doubt possessed extremely high intelligence. However, it couldn’t be more crafty than humans. At Nian Bing’s outstanding performance, it snorted disdainfully. “A rank 9 light spell can heal it, what’s some medicine going to do then? Stand here and don’t move. I’ll heal your arm. If you cannot make me food that will satisfy me, hehe, I’ll cripple both arms.” While saying this, it slowly lifted its claw and produced a low sob from its mouth. Five small little balls of light appeared on the tips of its claws. Its voice chanted in the mysterious language of dragons.

The golden light suddenly swelled and Salamandhys bellowed. Five golden lights shot out, enveloping Nian Bing. That incomparably pure aura was something Nian Bing had once felt from the Holy Light Stone. It felt like bathing in spring wind, as his whole body was covered in a beautiful gold light. He felt full of strength; even his Ice and Fire Source began to spin faster because of the golden light. The thing that pleased him the most was that he felt his deadweight right arm slightly sore. He could clearly feel his bones and meridians healing. Under the bathing of gold light, his blood vessels gradually flowed more smoothly, and his pale, lifeless right arm regained sensation.

Chapter 65.1 - The Dragon King's Weakness

The feeling of your bones regenerating was very strange. Nian Bing's heart was also rejuvenated. The greater fire dragon Salamandhys before him was not all that scary. At the very least, the current situation favored him. Nian Bing still harbored some suspicion. This was obviously a fire-attributed dragon, so how could it use light magic? No matter his current doubts however, nothing could compare to the happiness of his serious wound fully recovering. Now, anything was possible.

His previously sour and negative feelings disappeared as the golden light enshrouded him. Testing his right arm, it felt like it did before. He could freely control his right arm. After he tore off his bandages, he saw that the frightening-looking wound had completely disappeared, not a single mark remaining.

Suddenly, the golden light turned light blue. It was the feeling of water carefully cooling his swollen arm. As each wave of water pulsed through his arm, he could feel the sensation in his right arm getting stronger. He wiggled his fingers, still as nimble as before. It was like he had never been injured in the first place.

The light dimmed, then disappeared. The gigantic cave was completely silent; everyone was shocked by the strange magic the greater fire dragon Salamandhys had used. Both light and water magic had actually been used by a fire-attributed being. Such a strange situation surpassed everyone's scope of understanding.

“Okay, the light has healed you and the water re-hydrated you. Your arm should not be a problem, so you may begin now.”

Salamandhys acted as if he had just done this carelessly as he lazily ordered Nian Bing. He smacked his lips, his eyes filled with desire.

Nian Bing smiled and said, “Of course. Please, wait a moment.” While saying that, he took out all of his cooking tools and some ingredients from Li De’s and Feng Yun’s spatial storage items. Under Salamandhys’ watchful gaze, he suddenly frowned. He cast a gaze at the greater dragon, seemingly bashful. “Mighty Salamandhys, I am truly sorry. Could you lend me some things to use? Otherwise how could I cook?”

Salamandhys looked at him impatiently. “Lend you some things? Why are you so troublesome. What relation does lending you things have with cooking? Boy, if you are lying to me, you know what will happen.”

Nian Bing chuckled sheepishly. “I would never dare offend you. However, as a chef, cooking the best foods requires all sorts of tools. However, you took some of my things, so how can I prepare food for you? Of course, they are already yours, so I wanted you to just lend them to me so I can make you a meal.” If you dare extort me, you think I won’t hit back? Salamandhys, let’s play. Let’s see just who will have the last laugh.

Salamandhys’ claw was as dexterous as a human hand. He extended one finger, pointing at Nian Bing’s treasures. “You’re saying these are your kitchen knives?”

Nian Bing smiled. “That is it. Please lend them to me first, and I will definitely be able to satisfy you.”

Salamandhys said dissatisfied, “Humans are really a wasteful race. You brat, are actually more extravagant than me. I’ll lend them to you.” He waved his claw, and a red light ferried the three divine knives and the holy light stone back to Nian Bing. A wave of emotion overcame Nian Bing. He stooped as he caught the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Sigh and the Flame God’s Roar. The feeling of being united once again made him tremble. Old friends, you have returned. No worries, no matter what, I will never let you leave me again. He hurried to put these things into his space ring.

Not giving Salamandhys the chance to be dissatisfied, Nian Bing told two mercenaries to hold up his pot. After a brief moment of consideration, he took out a giant pork chop. “Because the things here are simple and crude, I will make you a pork chop. I believe you will enjoy it.” Salamandhys was a very large, so Nian Bing didn’t cut up the pork chop, directly tossing it into the pot. Then he condensed ice magic into ice cubes and put them into the pot and used a flame spell to melt the ice into water to soak the pork chop.

Salamandhys seemed to forget about the other people. He sat right next to Nian Bing, curiously watching his movements. “Boy, you can use both ice and fire magic?”

Nian Bing nodded. “I can’t compare to you though. You can use at least three fire magics whereas I can only use two.”

“Nononono, it’s not the same. The light magic and water magic I use are just imitations. Both the ice and fire magics are in you. En, this is a very rare constitution! However, your magic level is too

modest. The magic power in your body is chaotic, turning and turning. This is very interesting.”

Nian Bing completely missed the tail end of his words. When he heard the word ‘imitation’ his mind suddenly exploded. It seemed like light had pierced through the dense cloud in his head; as if he had just opened a new door to magic. He stopped, continuously muttering “An imitation!” to himself. He had thought of something, but had no way of truly grasping it.

Salamandhys raised a claw and lightly rapped it against Nian Bing’s head, making him come to. “Hey, hurry up and cook. Don’t dilly-dally; I’m very hungry.”

Nian Bing awoke from his stupor with excitement surging in his heart. He knew that now was not the time for questions. Even if he asked, Salamandhys wouldn’t tell him anything. He rubbed his aching head. “Mighty Salamandhys, did you know that once this pork chop have been soaked, the meat will become more tender. Hasty men don’t get to eat hot tofu. Wait a moment.”

Salamandhys snorted, bringing his head near the pot, desire in his eyes. “I could eat tofu in one mouthful. But what is tofu?”

Nian Bing explained patiently, “Tofu is a kind of food made out of soybeans. It has an extremely high nutritional value and is also delicious. If you want to eat it, I can make it for you later if I have the chance.”

“Good, good. There will be many chances for you from now on.

Now I'm starting to believe that you really are a chef." Salamandhys' tone was more cheerful now, like a small child.

Everyone next to them stared dumbfoundedly. Nian Bing and the greater fire dragon Salamandhys were conversing, but there was no sense of hostility between them; they were just like friends chatting. The greater dragon's current appearance was quite laughable. His fat butt was protruding in the back, while his tail wagged softly. One of his front claws was propping up his head as he stared at the porkchop in the pot, and the other was slowly rapping on the ground. This position and appearance was completely like a human; a hungry diner on the hunt for delicious food.

Feng Nu walked over to the cave wall. "Come, let's rest first and prepare to go out."

Ka Luo walked over to Feng Nu and asked quietly, "Miss Feng Nu, will this greater dragon really release us?"

Feng Nu smiled. "Could it be you don't believe in Nian Bing's cooking skills? With his abilities, it won't be difficult for him to sate that dragon's hunger."

Ka Luo said with worry, "Even if that dragon keeps his promise to let us go, what about Nian Bing? He's here because of me. If he stays here by himself, how can my heart be at ease? If we leave, and Nian Bing dies at Salamandhys hands, I..."

Feng Nu couldn't help but have a better impression of Ka Luo

because of his sincerity. She smiled, “You don’t need to worry about that. At the very least, Nian Bing’s life won’t be in danger. I believe that after that dragon tastes his food, he will protect him like one of his treasures. He definitely won’t be able to hurt him. As for how he will leave here, you’ve seen Nian Bing’s intelligence. I’ve heard that greater dragons were gluttons, but I never thought they were gluttons to this extent. Nian Bing will have nothing to worry about once we leave. President Ka Luo, is the person who nabbed the black bottle your employer?”

Ka Luo was stunned, then lowered his head. “Probably. His voice and aura is different, but his figure is still the same. So dark mages actually existed. It looks like our mercenary group’s future prospects are not optimistic.”

Feng Nu shook her head. “That’s not for certain. Since that person was a dark mage and took what is supposedly called Modas’ sealed bottle, he definitely doesn’t intend on telling others. You’re just one mercenary group; exterminating you has no advantage for him. I think that the black figure definitely won’t do anything harmful to himself. Either way, have everyone rest first.”

While they were over there talking, Nian Bing started to move. He took out the pork chop that had been soaked in ice water and placed it onto the board next to him. Using a flame spell, he began to heat the ice water.. At the same time, he added Sichuan pepper, star anise, chopped scallions, and ginger slices, as well as a dozen more seasonings. The water was brought to a boil, and the scent of the seasonings began to dissipate into the air with the water vapor. Salamandhys sniffed deeply. At the delightful scent, he began to wriggle excitedly. Where was the greater dragon that had lived tens of thousands of years?

“Boy, when will your pork chop be ready for eating? I’m already somewhat impatient. Hurry up, hurry up.” Salamandhys urged.

He was anxious, but Nian Bing wasn’t in a hurry at all. He responded calmly, “The more delicious something is, the more difficult the cooking process. It’s especially difficult to bring out the entirety of a porkchop’s flavor. . If you want it to be delicious, three conditions have to be met. First, the fire control must be extremely consistent. Second, the the flavor must be spread evenly. Third, delectable flavoring should be mixed in. If you want to eat a plain stewed pork chop, then I can give it to you right away. If you want to eat top-of-line pork chop, then you must wait. Which one do you want to eat?”

Salamandhys gulped, then said dejectedly. “I’ll wait, that’s fine. But it’s still taking so long! I’m hungry.”

Nian Bing replied calmly, “It won’t be too much longer. Don’t talk to me; if you disrupt my focus, the flavor will change. Could it be you want to eat substandard goods?”

“No, no, no, I don’t want to disturb you. Go ahead, go ahead.” At the prospect of eating delicious foods, Salamandhys had lost all of his usual arrogance. He blinked his large eyes and waited.

Nian Bing hid a smile. Salamandhys, oh Salamandhys, as long as I tame your stomach, I don’t think you can hurt me. As for who orders who in the future, well, that’s not set in stone.

With prompting of his magic, the Holy Light Stone leaped into his palm. Nian Bing used the light from the Holy Light Stone to illuminate the entire pork chop. After several breaths, he put them away. He grabbed a bottle of wine and evenly rubbed it into the pork chop. After he finished rubbing it all in, he immediately took out the Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh. Prompting the ice element, Morning Dew made 256 slashes at the pork chop, leaving 256 scratches. Then he flipped it over, making another 256 scratches on the other side. Then he rubbed in more wine.

While rubbing, he explained to Salamandhys, "The ice and fire elements are blended together with wine into the pork chop. Because I used ice and fire in different amounts, nine different subtle flavors will appear. The wine also can remove the pork chop's stench and also set off the fragrance of the meat. I'm adding ice and fire element again so that the pork chop will cook easier and so the flavor will be better. Mighty Salamandhys, please make a fire over here. A small fire is fine."

In his haste to have a taste of the delicious pork chop sooner, Salamanders didn't think over why Nian Bing didn't make the fire himself. He pointed his finger and a small flame sprouted slightly above the ground. Nian Bing tossed the pork chop over. While it was falling, Nian Bing used Morning Dew Knife and True Sun to catch it, then spun it again. The scent of alcohol and meat disseminated to the heat. It mixed with the scent of the well seasoned soup. Salamandhys was drooling, his eyes glinting with evident gluttony.

When the pork chop was half-cooked, Nian Bing used Morning Dew to stop the roasting process. He went over to the pot, and used a strainer to scoop out the ingredients, leaving behind the seasoned

soup. He put the pork chop into the pot, then covered it. Muttering a chant, a purple flame appeared in either of his hands. He put each on either side of the pot to continue heating it. At the same time, he turned to Salamandhys and said, “Help me cover up the pot, if you let a single drop of soup escape, it will lose flavor.”

Chapter 65.2 - The Dragon King's Weakness

“Okay.” Salamandhys gulped down another mouthful of saliva, then used his claw to press down on the pot lid. Other than through the small holes in the pot’s lid, the building steam could not escape. The fragrance of the meat and the soup blended together perfectly, to produce a tantalizing scent. It wasn’t just Salamandhys who was drooling; even the mercenaries could not stop swallowing their saliva.

After some time, Nian Bing released his spells. “Okay, you can remove your claw now.” Salamandhys lifted up his claw. Nian Bing opened the pot and put in some soy sauce and salt. The boiling soup mixed with the seasoning, the soup, and the pork chop together. When he added the salt in the end, it was a carefully engineered decision. If he added salt at the start it would permeate the flavor more deeply, but then the meat would take too long to stew and the flavor would take a hit. He took out Proud Sky and cut a piece of meat underneath Salamandhys’ violent gaze. He blew away the steam and popped into the mouth and chewed lightly.

Salamandhys was immediately angered once he saw Nian Bing’s euphoria. . He lifted his claw, about to punish this human who had dared to eat his delicacies, but then he heard Nian Bing say, “En, this is pretty good, although a bit rushed, it is edible.”

Salamandhys’ claw hovered in midair as he said excitedly, “I can eat it? Great!” The arduous wait finally came to an end.

Nian Bing used Proud Sky to cut another chunk of meat and nodded at Salamndhys. Salamandhys wasn’t polite as he directly

stuck the pork chop in the scalding pot with his claw. He then put it in his mouth and chewed loudly. He looked at Nian Bing's scowl. In merely a few chews the entire pork chop had been devoured.

Nian Bing furrowed his brow. "How did it taste, mighty Salamandhys?"

Salamandhys was infatuated. "Delicious, truly delicious!"

Nian Bing stared at him. "It was only delicious?"

Salamandhys didn't understand. "Delicious is not enough? For I, the mighty Salamandhys, to call your food delicious, it is your greatest honor."

This comment made Nian Bing snort condescendingly. "How much of the flavor could possibly be deciphered from eating in one gulp? My painstaking efforts were a waste."

Salamandhys went blank. "Is eating so complex? Isn't it all just chewing then swallowing?"

Nian Bing said arrogantly, "Cooking is a very precise art; eating is similar. Qing Meng, come." He called Zi Qing Meng over. She walked over, confused. Nian Bing gave the chunk of pork chop he had cut to her. "Try this, then describe the taste of the porkchop to me and the mighty Salamandhys."

Zi Qing Meng took the Proud Sky Knife and placed the pork chop

in her mouth. After chewing carefully, she finally swallowed. A light of admiration shone in her eyes. “Because of the two types of magic, the pork chop contains a hundred different flavors. The meat itself is tender and fragrant, but not greasy. The most peculiar thing is the magic allowed it to better retain the flavor of the wine. As for the seasonings: the natural flavor of the meat is complemented perfectly by them and the magic and strong wine act to unify the flavor. This truly is a delicacy of the world! Especially the fire control: it was immaculate. Even my cooking would not be able to reach such heights.”

Nian Bing took back Proud Sky from Zi Qing Meng, then turned to Salamandhys. “You hear that? The things I make need to be carefully analyzed in order for their true essence to be understood. The more you know and the more you appreciate, the more bliss you will find in food. Just wantonly eating everything in a few bites will only give you the tiniest taste of the real flavor; an ignorant “delicious” your only response. Don’t you think that all that flavor dissolving in your stomach, untasted, is much too wasteful?”

Salamandhys blinked then muttered, “Your argument seems quite reasonable, but how should I do that?”

Nian Bing smiled. “Since you wanted me to stay, then from now on, we have lots of time to exchange pointers on the many delicacies I create. So, will you let my friends go? If you do all the tantalizing foods I can make will be prepared when you desire.”

Salamandhys swept his eyes over the crowd. After a moment’s hesitation he said, “Okay, but I have a condition.”

Nian Bing frowned. “A condition? Mighty Salamandhys, you really are worthy of calling yourself ‘mighty’. Whatever you say is like a rushing wave.”

Salamandhys chuckled. “Of course I will keep to my words, but you are evidently very crafty. In order to keep you under control, I have no choice but to be on guard. A brat like you will not submit to me unless there is a threat on your life. If you attacked me, it would allow me to end you at any moment. If you attack me, your friends will be released immediately ” A greater dragon who had lived for over ten thousand years would never be easy to deal with. Nian Bing had little choice in the matter.

Even despite the concerned cries of Feng Nu, Long Ling and the others, Nian Bing did not hesitate to lightly wave the Proud Sky Knife, sending a wind blade towards Salamandhys. After making contact with his scales, not even the slightest mark could be found and Salamandhys roared in excitement, loud enough to shake the heavens. Red light radiated off of his massive body dying the air around him then diffusing to wrap around the thirty or so people. His massive wings flapped once, propelling him and the others through the gaping maw of cave far above Nian Bing who had been sent staggering by the violent gale of wind.

Long Ling looked at Nian Bing through a veil of tears and shouted, “Nian Bing, you have to survive! You promised we would talk!”

Feng Nu also shouted, “Nian Bing, you definitely must live. Live! And satisfy your vengeance! Live! And I might even consider being

your girlfriend!”

Zi Qing Meng joined in. “Big Brother and I are going to the Profound Orchid Empire to seek refuge with the Silver Feather Cavalry. If you leave here alive, come and find us!”

Nian Bing smiled and waved at them, his expression tinged with sorrow. “Feng Nu, remember what you said. Ling’er, give me a chance, don’t marry Shi Jiu.”

Long Ling couldn’t stop her tears from rolling down her face. “Idiot, I lied. I was never engaged to him. I’ll be waiting for you in Ice and Snow City, even if it’s for my whole life. You promised Father that you would participate in the Rising Mage Tournament, so for us, you definitely must live.”

“What are you all troubled about? Is being parted in life and death so interesting?” Salamandhys suddenly increased his flying speed. Long Ling, Feng Nu and the others could no longer be heard.

Watching their departing figures, Nian Bing’s vision blurred. His prison was large and with a dragon as his warden, leaving would be easier said than done. Now he could only do things step-by-step, and hope that the “mighty” Salamandhys would forever be a glutton; at least he would be able to live then. He gazed at his healed right arm. Nian Bing simply sat down on Salamandhys’ treasure pile. He was neither optimistic nor pessimistic about his situation. He was still thinking about the word ‘imitation’ and mulling over how he should cultivate his Ice and Fire Source Magic. Rather than hope for luck, it would be way better to work

hard to raise his strength. He didn't have such extravagant hopes as to be able to fight against the greater fire dragon Salamandhys, but as long as he increased his strength, he would have a chance. Since his parents had been killed by the Ice God's Pagoda, he would never give up.

Not too long after, the ground shook again. The "mighty" salamandhys had returned. "Boy, I have already fulfilled my promise and given your friends their freedom."

Now free of worries about what happened to them, Nian Bing coolly appraised Salamandhys. "So you're saying I should thank you? Also, don't call me boy. My name is Nian Bing."

Salamandhys was angered slightly. "Bastard, is that the tone you take when talking to the mighty Salamandhys? Don't forget, you attacked me; I can claim your life with but a single thought."

Nian Bing smiled thinly. "I'm afraid you won't be doing that. After eating my food, I don't think that you could have any interest in any other person's food. Let's do an exchange. You tell me about imitation magic, and I'll teach you how to enjoy good food. How's that?"

Salamandhys snorted. "Your thought process is not wrong, for lowly human that is. Know that you have no right to negotiate with me, the mighty Salamandhys." Nian Bing felt his body being squeezed, then lifted aloft by Salamandhys' massive claw. A scorching aura pervaded his body and his clothes immediately turned ash grey. Salamandhys then thrust Nian Bing away and onto the ground. His skin was scraped away and ravaged by the

uneven ground. The intense pain caused Nian Bing to groan, his head hazy. He promptly passed out.

“Hey, hey, you can’t be that flimsy.” Salamandhys couldn’t help but feel frightened by Nian Bing’s unresponsive, crumpled body. Of course, he could care less about whether Nian Bing lived or died, but his meals were of importance.. Even after the pork chop had entered his belly, the succulent flavor lingered on. This was something he had never experienced before. He knit back together the wounds which covered Nian Bing’s body with a light spell in the fear that Nian Bing might die. Salamandhys checked Nian Bing’s condition, then began to slumber beside Nian Bing’s unconscious form.

When Nian Bing woke up, the light that had trickled down from above had dimmed. He found that he wasn’t the least bit uncomfortable, though his magic power was only at about half of it’s full capacity. Using a flame spell, he illuminated the surroundings. The greater dragon Salamandhys was reclining next to him, asleep, while his treasures sparkled under the flickering glow of the flame. His heart jumped. He loudly called out to Salamandhys, but the dragon was sleeping too deeply. There was no response. Nian Bing’s heart jumped. Although he didn’t believe he could escape, how would he know for sure until he tried?

“Mighty Ice and Snow Goddess! Please, lend me your anger to send me onto the opposite bank– Snowstorm.” Ice element swirled beneath his feet. He carefully manipulated his magic so he wasted less of his magic power and pushed himself higher and higher, towards the cave’s gaping maw. Normally, the snowstorm spell would not be capable of taking him so high, but with the help of his top tier magic stone, the Snow Goddess’ Sigh, the spell was

much more powerful and continued to carry him farther and farther into the sky. For the first three hundred meters Nian Bing was still scared of waking Salamandhys so he took it slow, but after, since Salamandhys had yet to respond, he grew bolder and sped up.

As the mouth of the cave drew nearer, Nian Bing could already see the multitude of shiny stars dotting the dark night sky and the moon shining like a jewel as it peeked over the distant horizon. His eyes moistened. Was he finally free? Just as he grew level with the cave's exit, a large head obscured his vision popped up in front of him. "Hey, boy, where do you think you're going!?" The familiar voice boomed and a red light flashed around him. The owner of the gigantic head was the fire dragon, Salamandhys. Nian Bing's heart sunk like a stone. Just when he wanted to say something when he saw Salamandhys claw swipe lightly. The snowstorm beneath him immediately disappeared without a trace. When he attempted to use magic, he realized that Salamandhys' fire magic sealed it away. He suddenly felt weightless as he fell down towards the ground like a shooting star.

I'm done for. Was Nian Bing's first thought as he came to terms with his current predicament. Falling from such a high place, perhaps none of his bones would be left intact. The intense weightless sensation made Nian Bing forget everything else. His memories began to flash before his eyes. At this moment, the very first thing he recalled was the palpable despair in his parents eyes as he used the space scroll to escape. Father, Mother, Nian Bing cannot avenge you.

Suddenly his body grew light; something had caught him. His descent slowed, his whole body shook, and then he felt himself

drifting. When he managed to steady himself, he found himself on Salamandhys' broad back. "Thinking of running so soon. You humans really have no trustworthiness." From his tone, Salamandhys did not seem to be angry.

After landing back on the ground, Salamandhys shook Nian Bing from his back, though he caught him in his claws before setting him on the ground. Because of the red light like fire emitted from him, Nian Bing could see his surroundings clearly. He was smart, so he didn't ask Salamandhys why he didn't kill him. Instead he asked, "Are you hungry?"

Salamandhys stared blankly. He obviously didn't think that Nian Bing would respond that way and involuntarily nodded. "That pork chop you made was not enough to even fill the cracks between one of my teeth."

Chapter 66.1 - The Dragon King's Personal Chef

Nian Bing chuckled. "Then I'll make you something good."

Salamandhys got excited. "Good, good. Quickly now. Your friends left behind quite a bit of ingredients; I reckon there will be enough for several meals. En, I'll give you the honor of being the mighty Salamandhys' exclusive chef!"

Nian Bing nodded. "No problem, but I want to know how did you manage to get up there so quickly? You're so big, so if you'd flown past me, I should have been able to notice you!"

Salamandhys snorted. "Idiot, did you forget about my mimicry? I can imitate light magic and water magic, so why can't I do the same for space magic? For just a 3000 meters, a rank 7 movement spell is sufficient."

Nian Bing asked in surprise, "You're saying you can imitate any magic? Darkness too?"

Salamandhys replied arrogantly, "Of course I can. Our dragon race are innate magic users. We can easily use what humans call forbidden spells. Even if it's a different attribute of magic, we can imitate the basics. All magics, in their fundamental forms, are quite similar to each other.. Although every magic element has a different form, as long as you can control the changes in magic waves, you can imitate any kind of magic. Of course, It's impossible for you humans, but we dragons can imitate magic of

other natures rank 9 and below.”

Imitation— although Salamandhys spoke very generally, it had given Nian Bing an idea. Since dragons could do it, wouldn't human mages be able to replicate it on a lower level? Although humans were naturally inferior to dragons, he wasn't your average human; he possessed both fire and ice magic. As the two magics were rotating in unison, if he could make both of them imitate the other, the Ice and Fire source would no longer be a threat.

Not only would cultivation become easier, with a few tweaks, he would be able to better utilize the Ice and Fire Source. Although, to advance in imitation, he needed to have a better understanding of similarities of ice and fire as well as their variations. As always, this would require more time.

Making a meal for dragon was certainly a laborious task. Just how big were dragons' stomachs? Nian Bing and them had brought enough ingredients to feed thirty people for a month, but Salamandhys alone had eaten a third of those ingredients in a single meal. Nian Bing had made the simplest food he could prepare, but even making this one meal tired him terribly. He had a couple bites to eat, then sat on the side, breathing heavily.

Salamandhys ate each plate very slowly. “Nian Bing, boy, by eating slowly like this wasn't I supposed to experience the best flavor? Why is it I can't taste any of the variations you talked about!?”

Nian Bing said ill-humoredly, “Boss, don't forget that you're a dragon. How could a dragon's sense of taste be the same as

human's? It seems that your sense of taste isn't keen enough, so naturally you can't grasp every flavor."

Salamandhys stopped his feasting. He said angrily, "Fuck, why didn't you say that earlier, you brat? I ate all those things without enjoying their best flavors."

Nian Bing stared blankly, then said, "If I told you before, what use would there be? Wouldn't you eat it the same way?" Although they hadn't been in contact long, Nian Bing discovered that except for Salamandhys' self-importance, he wasn't all that hard to get along with. At least, when he was making him food, he was exceedingly desperate, going as far as to be his assistant. That thirst for food was just like a gluttonous child. Anyways, he wouldn't be leaving this place for a while so he relaxed. It wasn't really that hard to interact with Salamandhys.

"Nonsense, of course it would have been better for you to have said that earlier. What are humans? If I turn into a human won't I have a human's sense of taste?" Under Nian Bing's surprised gaze, a red light enshrouded Salamandhys, then suddenly rippled, condensing around his massive body. Gradually, the red light intensified until the piercing glare blinded Nian Bing. Then the light suddenly vanished. When Nian Bing regained his sight, his mouth fell open in surprise. Salamandhys' massive body was nowhere to be seen, and in his place was a man that looked to be about Nian Bing's age.

He was also almost as tall as Nian Bing and had a head of fiery red hair. Although he wasn't as handsome as Nian Bing, he emitted a domineering aura. A dark red warrior's robe covered his perfect

body. The pressure he emitted gave people an extreme sense of danger. Chuckling, he said, “How do I look? Bet you didn’t expect this. There’s nothing on this continent that the mighty Salamandhys cannot do.” He wriggled a bit in his now human body. Then in a flash, he arrived in front of Nian Bing.

Nian Bing’s mouth was still hanging open. “Y-you’re really Salamandhys?”

Salamandhys knocked on his head. “Idiot, you forgot ‘the mighty’ part.” Now a human, he felt more real. Looking at the someone of his age before him, Nian Bing couldn’t stifle a dry laugh. Creatures like dragons were indeed not something within a human’s scope of imagination.

Salamandhys continued to eat his massive serving. “Ee, as expected the taste is different. A human’s sense of taste is really useful! Fuck, I was missing out on so much before. It seems good to be a human.” Although he was in a human form, he still had the stomach of a dragon. Bit by bit, he managed to finish everything that Nian Bing made. Satisfied, he patted his stomach and reclined on his pile of treasures. “Nian Bing, I finally understand what flavors you were talking about. It truly is wonderful! Is all human food so fantastic?”

Nian Bing managed to recover while Salamandhys was finishing up the meal. He walked next to him and sat down. “Not all of it. But for me, cooking is its own culture, and human’s cooking is a boundless sea. There are many delicious foods that even I haven’t seen. Among humans, I am definitely a outstanding chef, but I can’t say that I am the best.”

Salamandhys flipped over in surprise. “So you’re saying that there are even better foods?”

Nian Bing smiled. “Of course there are. If we have the chance later, I’ll bring you out try some.” After Salamandhys turned into a human, he didn’t know why but Nian Bing felt his fear lessen greatly. “Might Salamandhys, did you give up on that Modas’ Sealed Bottle? You don’t seem to be worried at all.”

Salamandhys snorted. “How could I be worried. There isn’t just one one Modas’ Sealed Bottle; there are six in total. Divided between me and the other five dragon kings, except for the darkness dragon king. If you don’t have all of them, one alone is useless. I definitely need it back, but for now I’m not worried.”

Nian Bing was curious. “What kind of things are the Modas’ Sealed Bottles? Why do they need the protection of six greater dragons?”

Salamandhys’ expression changed slightly. “You don’t need to know. That knowledge is of no use to you. Also, remember, I’m a dragon king, not a greater dragon.”

“Dragon king? Dragon kings and greater dragons are different? Aren’t you here because the Dragon God assigned you to protect the continent?” Nian Bing’s curiosity intensified.

Salamandhys answered arrogantly, “After the war in ancient times, many races on the Yangguang continent disappeared. The

divine realm felt that us dragons were much too powerful for humans and thus unsuited to living on the continent. Thus, the Lord Dragon God called us back into the divine realm. At that time, Lord Dragon God assigned one greater dragon of each attribute to protect the continent, choosing us as the 7 great dragon kings. Those other six guys were really crafty, actually choosing themselves to stay. So of course I couldn't be outdone."

Nian Bing asked, "So gods really exist? What's wrong with the divine realm? Why didn't you want to go?"

Salamandhys said, "Dogshit gods. The so-called 'gods' were appointed by humans. Actually, gods are humans, just strong humans. Before the ancient battle, every single magic element was much more concentrated on this continent. At that time, some of you humans were insightful and cultivated painstakingly, until they reached extreme heights. They completely surpassed human capabilities and you call them gods.

"This guy who called himself god used powerful magic to create another continent, but he also sealed it away. That is what we call the divine realm. So it's not really the divine realm, more like a magic realm item. Because of the mystical protections on the realm, it is undetectable. However, that so-called 'god' had too much self-esteem. He made an agreement not to affect the humans, otherwise they would be attacked by the so-called god. The dragon kings are the highest existence in your mortal realms. If we went to that 'divine' realm, then we could only be above the ordinary greater dragons at the whims of that god. I have no interest in being controlled, so naturally staying here is best."

This was the first time Nian Bing had heard the actual reason behind gods. “So you’re saying that humans can cultivate to become gods? If I work hard and reach that realm, could I enter the divine realm?”

Salamandhys nodded. “Of course. But the world isn’t like it was before. Cultivating to a god level isn’t so easy to do. You humans have limited lifespans. In close to ten thousand years, I have never seen anyone come close to the level of the divine realm. However, there is someone now who is close to that. She probably has a chance.”

Nian Bing shuddered. “Are you talking about the Ice God’s Pagoda, Ice and Snow Goddess’ Worshipper?”

Salamandhys shot Nian Bing a glance. “That is that human girl. I really don’t know how she trained, but she is such a devout believer of the ice god. Harsh cultivation for over a hundred years must be really difficult from here. She has remained a virgin and cultivated since she was young, giving her an advantage ordinary humans don’t have so that she could attain the level that humans call a descended god mage. However, she has a few obstacles in her path to becoming a true god. Me and the ice dragon were talking about her last time we met. Now even we probably couldn’t hurt her. That girl’s magic is certainly impressive.”

“What? Even you couldn’t deal with the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Worshipper?” Nian Bing trembled; it was like ice water had been poured on his head. A chill ran through him. He knew how mighty greater dragons were, but he didn’t think that even someone as arrogant as Salamandhys would admit he couldn’t kill the Ice and

Snow Goddess' Worshiper. Such a strong enemy, how could he contend against her?

“What’s this, you and that little girl have some bad blood? If you do, I advise you to give up. That girl already has a demi-god’s body and is just one step away from god level. In less than a decade she’ll make it into the god realm, then the Divine Realm will take her in. According to what that ice dragon said, that girl knew about the existence of the Divine Realm since she was very young and she always devotedly cultivated ice magic so that she could go to the Divine Realm. Over a century of hard work has been devoted to her goal. You think that you can surpass her?”

Ideas were flashing through Nian Bing’s mind without stop. “No. Even the strongest person has a weakness. As long as I work hard, anything can happen.”

Salamandhys smiled strangely. “Of course it could happen. That little girl is not without flaws. If you take her virginity, then her ice element will be destroyed, forever unable to enter the realm of the gods.”

Nian Bing stared. “Mages who want to cultivate to the limits need to have virgin bodies? I’ve never heard of that.”

Salamandhys snorted. “That’s because you are ignorant and narrow-minded. What do the current day mages understand? The magic you can do is on a very ordinary level. Of course you don’t need to be a virgin, just hard work. With the present state of the magic element on the continent, you will probably need three or four centuries to reach the god realm. However, it would be great

if you could even live that long.

That girl took a shortcut. By cultivating with a virgin body and with her hard work and many magic items, she could reach her present state in just over a hundred years. Boy, if you have some unfinished business with her, just take her virginity, send her dreams of joining the divine realm to the pits of hell. That is revenge. You don't necessarily have to kill people, hehe. If you want revenge, then giving your opponent imaginably suffering is true revenge! How's that? If you have the chance, go and rape her. I'll support you. I'll go with you to watch. How's that?"

Chapter 66.2 - The Dragon King's Personal Chef

Nian Bing's face twisted. Although Salamandhys' expression was very perverted, he didn't seem to be lying. "Give me a break. I don't have any interest towards an old woman. Moreover, would you even let me go?"

Salamandhys chuckled. "Of course I wouldn't. Actually, even if you wanted to rape her, it wouldn't be easy unless you were stronger than her. But that's impossible, not even in a century. Nian Bing, boy, to be frank with you, even though that girl is very old, her body is still very nice because of the long years she spent cultivating ice magic. It must be as good as a young maiden. Such a shame you won't rape her; it really isn't such a bad choice. It will feel good and will also count as revenge. Isn't that great!?"

Nian Bing stared at him blankly. "I'm really suspicious right now. Are you actually a dragon? Are all dragons like you?"

Salamandhys snorted. "In order to better survive in this world you must be flexible. The most important thing is that it's beneficial for you. Because I understand this, I have become one of the dragon god's chosen. Boy, you don't need to tell me that you want your revenge to be just and honorable."

"Of course not. As long as I can have my revenge, I will do anything." His eyes flashed coldly, and he clenched his hands.

Salamandhys said leisurely, "I see, there really is some bad blood

between you and that silly Ice God's Pagoda girl! You better hurry up with your revenge. Ten years from now, she'll have gone to the divine realm. Then what chance would you have?"

Nian Bing smiled bitterly. "Could I even get revenge the way I am now? Would you even let me go out?"

Salamandhys chuckled. "I just said I wouldn't let go of you, not that you couldn't go out. Didn't you just say there were many delicious foods out there? We can go and try them. You're familiar with humans. So long as you can get me delicious foods to eat, we don't always have to stay here. Do you think I want to lie around here and sleep the whole day?! The Lord Dragon God only let me cultivate the Dragon God's supreme spell as long as I stayed here. Right now I'm finished with the spell, so I can finally go out and play. Only an idiot would want to stay."

Nian Bing felt his heart jump. "So you're saying you'll bring me out of here so we can go through the continent and try delicious foods?"

Salamandhys shook his head. "No, no, no, don't be mistaken. It's not that I'm bringing you out of here. You are bringing me out of here to try delicious foods. Of course, you must listen to me."

Nian Bing grinned. He didn't expect that he wouldn't need to find a way to leave here. Salamandhys was the one who wanted to leave all along and eat the delicacies of the world. So what if he couldn't he go wherever he liked? Although his freedom would be hampered to a degree, if you thought about positively, Salamandhys would be his undefeatable bodyguard.

“Oh mighty Salamandhys! I have some things I’d liked to discuss with you.” Nian Bing had been counting his chickens before they hatched.

Salamandhys snorted. “Discuss what? I still think you’ve forgotten how to address me.”

Nian Bing smiled. “How could I have forgotten? Making food for you is my honour. HOver, as you know, as your chef, if my magic is too weak, wouldn’t I bring shame to you? When I came here I saw that you had quite a few magic books . If I could learn some things from them, I could probably come up with better ways of cooking. You see....”

Salamandhys glared. “Fine! You actually dare covet my treasures. Quit dreaming. Those magic books used are written in ancient script. Even if I gave them to you, you wouldn’t understand.”

Nian Bing said despondently, “I won’t understand even a bit? That really such a wastel. It seems that if we are to meet danger, I can only ask you to protect me. Shame, you can’t directly attack humans, and my magic is far too weak.”

Salamandhys tilted his head. “Boy, you don’t need to make my decisions for me. Seeing as the food you make is truly delicious, I will naturally point out a few tricks of magic to you when I am pleased. However, you need to satisfy my stomach. If I get tired of your food, I might just snap off your head.”

Nian Bing rejoiced inside. If he could actually get some pointers about magic from an existence as powerful as Salamandhys, it would be massively helpful for his Ice and Fire Source. He hurried to say, “Don’t worry, as one of the preeminent chefs on the Yangguang continent, my food will definitely satisfy you. Now, could you teach me some about this imitation magic? You already know I have two attributes, but I cannot control them. That is what is restricting my magic development. It will be difficult to raise my magic higher.”

“I’m sleepy. Let’s talk about this later. Recover your magic power first. Once the food is finished, we will leave here to search for delicious food outside.” Salamandhys began snoring loudly. Although he was in human form, his snores were enough to shake the whole cave.

Eating then sleeping, is he a pig? Nian Bing insulted in his head, helplessly shaking his head. He walked over to the side and sat down. He didn’t immediately enter meditation, but rather mulled over Salamandhys’ words. According to him, the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Worshipper cultivated for over a century to reach where she was now. That was simply too scary. Could it be that the difference between a magister and a descended god mage was that big?

He remembered that when he was young, his father had said that because Mother secretly got together with him, she was punished by the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Worshipper. Perhaps the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Worshipper wanted her mother to inherit her position and choose the path of virgin cultivation. Salamandhys also said that destroying the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Worshipper’s virginity was the best revenge, but never mind. Although he

wasn't some upright individual, he had no interest towards a granny over one hundred years old. She was old enough to be his grandmother. Just you wait, Ice and Snow Goddess' Worshipper. Even if I cannot be stronger than you, I will find a way to humiliate you.

Nian Bing shut his eyes, calmed himself, and settled into a meditative state. He gripped the Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh and the Flame God's Roar in each hand, each of them devouring the magic element in the air. Actually, he himself didn't notice, but his cultivation speed was much greater than an ordinary mage.

This wasn't just because he was a dual element mage who could absorb two types of magic, but also (and more importantly) because of the Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh and the Flame God's Roar. Two top-tier divine stones normally wouldn't produce too visible effects. They seemed to only make spells stronger as well as let him save a bit more magic power. Actually, during his normal cultivation, the two divine stones possessed a special energy that was imperceptibly (but constantly) altering Nian Bing's constitution and making his magic power purer.

It was an easily visible effect. Li De was a magic scholar, but in battle capability and magic usage, when using a similarly ranked spell, he definitely wasn't any stronger than Nian Bing. His magic power reserve was bigger, but in terms of purity it was not close to one of Nian Bing's magics. Right now, Nian Bing was building his foundation. The firmer his foundation was, the stronger the mage he could become. Fire dragon Salamandhys saw this, of course, but since he viewed Nian Bing as so insignificant, he naturally wouldn't mention it to him.

Three days passed. Salamandhys was definitely top player in cleaning out food. When he became human, his eating speed slowed down quite a bit, but he just didn't stop eating. If he wasn't sleeping, he would be eating. Nian Bing's speed at making food was barely enough for him. In these three days, these two people repeated the same routine. Salamandhys would eat, sleep, eat and Nian Bing would cook, meditate, cook. Fortunately, Salamandhys was considerate. When he was eating he wouldn't forget to leave Nian Bing a little. Through his nonstop eating, Ka Luo and the others' left behind ingredients were finally used up.

Lying on top of his treasures with great satisfaction, Salamandhys sighed. "This is too wonderful. Thinking of the tens of thousands of years I, the mighty Salamandhys, have lived, I have eaten the best in these past few days. Nian Bing, you really weren't boasting. All of the food you make has subtle variations. I am looking forward to the outside world."

Nian Bing said in ill-humor, "While you eat well, I am almost dying of exhaustion. If you eat like this everyday, I will be done for before long."

Salamandhys chuckled. "No way, how could I let you die of exhaustion? Oh, that's right. Haven't you noticed that even though your body is tired, your spirit seems to have improved? Your magic progress is much quicker?"

Nian Bing snorted angrily. "That is the result of my hard work, as well as the abundant fire element here. Every day I make food for you to eat, so my spirit has been in a constant state of exhaustion. And don't talk about progress, I'm about to dry out of

exhaustion.”

Salamandhys patted Nian Bing’s shoulder. “Okay, okay, don’t be grouchy. Anyways you are about to leave this ocean of suffering. I don’t need to eat everyday. For me, eating is just an enjoyment. You’re hard times are coming to an end. Anyways, there aren’t any more ingredients, so we will leave today. I will give you some magic insight as your remuneration. How’s that?”

Nian Bing’s eyes sparkled. “You really will teach me? It can’t be some trash insight. Don’t forget, I am a person and you are a dragon. Our bodies are not made of the same stuff and our interactions with magic are different. Will your insights will be useful for me?”

Salamandhys snorted. “You understand nothing. Although I am a dragon, I have lived for tens of thousands of years. I’m not quite familiar with you humans’ composition, but I know magic that you will never be able to reach. So stop with the nonsense and pick up your stuff. Get ready to go.” He pointed at his kitchen utensils.

We’re finally leaving. Nian Bing couldn’t suppress the jubilation in his heart, though his outer expression showed no sign of it. After cleaning his kitchen utensils, he put them into his space ring.

Salamandhys looked at his treasures and groaned. “Nian Bing, I suddenly found a problem. Your three knives represent fire, ice, and wind attributed magic, ice being an evolution of water. Haven’t you seen when you use different knives on the food, even if you don’t use magic, the same food will have a different taste?”

Nian Bing spoke while putting away his things, “Nonsense. Because I use these three knives inlaid with high-quality magic stones, I infuse the magic element into the ingredients. So naturally, when you eat it the flavors will taste different. This is the advantage of using magic in cooking. Ordinary chefs, even if their skills are outstanding, cannot make a dish have the flavor of magic. Because of this, my teacher lost against an ordinary barbecued roast.”

Salamandhys chuckled. “If it’s like that, if you could use every kind of attributed knife, would you be able to produce even more flavors?”

Nian Bing’s eyes flashed. “You say that to so easily. Ordinary magic knives are useless. I can only use these top-quality knives to blend the element into the food. Could it be you have some top-tier knives? I don’t believe it. What’s more, I can only use fire and ice magic. I don’t have imitation like you, so I can only use fire and ice element in my food. Other magics are impossible.”

Salamandhys looked at him and chuckled. “Boy, stop with the pretentious act. I know you want to learn my magic imitation, and have designations on my treasures.”

Nian Bing’s face remained calmed. “I do? You were the one who mentioned it. What does it have to do with me? Didn’t you say you wanted to leave here? I’ve put everything away.”

Salamandhys leisurely laid against his treasure pile. “Nian Bing,

it isn't impossible for you to learn my magic mimicry. If you were an ordinary human mage, it would be impossible, but you are different. Ice and fire magics are diametrically opposed to one another. If you can cultivate the true Ice and Fire Source and use it as your foundation, it you won't be much worse than us dragons."

Chapter 67.1 - The Dragon King's Personal Chef

Nian Bing's heart jumped. "So what you're saying is that if I use the Ice and Fire Source as my foundation, I can imitate other attributes of magic, is that right?"

Salamandhys chuckled. "In theory, yes, but as for whether you will be successful, you'll have to see what level you can cultivate your Ice and Fire Magic Source to. You don't need to rush, just cultivate slowly. The Ice and Fire Source isn't easy to control. Even I don't understand the theory behind it. But I'll give you a suggestion, and you can investigate it further. For example, a single magic element is small, a sparrow is also small, but it has a full set of organs. If you can study a single bit of magic element thoroughly, you may be able to find out more. All magic element has things in common, even the diametrically opposed ice and fire, light and darkness are no exception.

"What do ice and fire have in common? If you can understand this, then your future will become that much easier. Mutually opposing each other, in certain circumstances they can mutually transform one another. This is the first lesson.

"I know that this is relatively profound, and might be too hard to understand for a magic beginner like you, but don't be discouraged. Slowly now. Of course, you don't need to thank me. Even if you learned magic mimicry, it would far be from my level. I'm teaching you this not because of any good intentions. The more magics you master, the more different flavors you can create. We're in a mutually beneficial relationship."

Although Nian Bing did not have too great of an impression of Salamandhys, he acknowledged the depth of his magic knowledge. He engraved Salamandhys' words into his mind. He couldn't completely understand it, but he knew that it was extremely useful for his future cultivation. "Who was going to thank you. It's as you said, we're friends with benefits. Anyways, you see as me as an eyesore. At worst, you would kill me. And with your ability, a nobody like me would be an instakill. However, there probably isn't anyone else who can infuse magic into their cooking like me on the continent."

"Shitty brat, you dare threaten the mighty Salamandhys? You're looking for death." Salamandhys sat up quickly, eyes flashing with a fiery light. He angrily glared at Nian Bing.

Nian Bing responded with a smile. "No need to get worked up. You have lived for over a millennia; if you really get angry over a few words, you aren't the mighty Salamandhys."

Salamandhys stared blankly, then broke into laughter. "Boy, [are you slapping my dragon ass](#)? But that does sound nice. That said, I can't waste you. If you can find other attributed magic knives, it will be quite beneficial for your magic and culinary arts. En, I won't waste you. I'll let you borrow these first."

While speaking, he stuck an arm into his pile of treasure. He flicked his wrist, and a golden light appeared in his palm. When the light dimmed, a knife appeared, a very ordinary looking knife. It looked almost the same as a knife used by the average cavalry knight. It had a wide blade and a thick back, and was about 1.3

meters in length. At its thickest, the back of the knife was close to an inch wide. This thick-backed knife was most suited for cutting, an ordinary shaped battle knife. The only thing not normal about it was the golden light that drenched it. However, this knife wasn't decorated, not even a single scratch. The handle shone, but it didn't have finger indents like Proud Sky. The gentle gold light gave what should have been a ferocious weapon a gentle aura.

Salamandhys flicked it lightly, and the knife immediately emitted a joyous hum. The golden light around it flickered gently, revealing a hole in its glow. It seemed to be so gentle because of Salamandhys' pressure. He gave Nian Bing a look. "What do you think about this knife?"

Nian Bing nodded and praised, "It really is an excellent knife. It should be specialized for a cavalry soldier's usage. If my guess is not wrong, this knife should be about the same weight, but the most special thing is its light magic aura. A normal weapon is hard to become a light magic item because light magic is the most pure and most holy, inharmonious with a weapon.

"For this knife to obtain the recognition of the light element and become a light magic knife, if I'm not wrong, it wasn't originally used for killing, but a ceremonial knife."

Salamandhys laughed loudly. "You spoke well. To have this understanding is pretty good for a weak human like you. Just a pity that nothing you said was right.

"Although this knife is surrounded by massive light element and full of a divine aura, it's a war knife used to kill, not a ceremonial

knife. This knife has countless lives to its name. However, it still is a divine knife not a demonic knife.

“It was bestowed light element and divine aura, not by a light mage, but as a favor from heaven. So light element naturally gathers around it. This is one of the most precious treasures of my hoard. It has many descriptions, the most widely known is Dawn at Daybreak. Over ten thousand years ago, it shone for the sake of the poor and those forced to do evil. When dawn comes, all suffering will end.

“This holy knife’s name is Dawn. It has appeared in your human world for a total of seventy-three years. In these seventy-three years, the holy knife Dawn was the nightmare of all the evil; the dawn of all those forced to do evil. This knife has claimed innumerable lives of evil people. Even if it might not have killed a demon king, this knife doesn’t only cut humans but also those of other races. Even our dragons have three evil dragons die by this blade.

“Although this Dawn Knife has claimed countless lives, all those killed were of great wickedness. It has been cursed by these evil people, but it was also extolled by ordinary citizens and the bullied. When this knife is kill other organisms, it only needs to shine; the blade never touches the enemy bodies, just emits a white light impossible to defend against. The nightmare of its enemies.

“Afterwards, Dawn crisscrossed the continent for sixty years when its white light turned gold. That isn’t because of what humans called ‘holy qi’, but rather because the knife received the baptism of the light element and turned into a light holy knife.

Including me, no one knows what that knife was made out of, but after ten thousand years, it still doesn't have any signs of corrosion. The divine light element protects the Universe's Dawn Knife forever."

Nian Bing sighed. "Something from ten thousand years ago is already long gone from the continent's history, but listening to you and seeing this knife, I can imagine the valiance of the people from the past. He was born for justice; something that I can never contend with. I only live to pursue revenge and the peak of culinary arts.

"Salamandhys, can you explain his story in greater detail? I am very curious about the one who crisscrossed the continent for 73 years, so dedicated to justice. Could just one person perform so righteously? Could it be he never did anything evil? It's really hard for me to believe, how could his strength be enough to affect a whole continent?"

Salamandhys snorted. "Idiot, when did I ever talk about him? Whether he did bad things or not can be seen from the knife. To be acknowledged by the element, doesn't that confirm it all? Can you make the light element acknowledge you?

"Only by being open-minded and candid, with light in your heart, and devoting all of you to helping others could you do that. I very scarcely admire humans, but I can't help but admire that person. On this continent, there have been several people who obtained god level strength, but the only one who truly entered the Divine Realm was the owner of Dawn.

“As far as I know, he was the only saint of the entire continent. He received the worship of all the races. That was also one of the few times that the entire continent was united, and united for a very long time. Everyone showed love and respect for one another. At that time, the Yangguang Continent was a single, independent democratic nation. An unprecedented cohesion of humans. What a pity, a pity.”

Salamandhys' human form possessed a dim light to his eyes. He shook his head as he lost himself in reverie in the Dawn Knife.

Nian Bing's heart jump. “What's a pity? Could it be something happened after? Didn't you say that saint ascended to the God Realm? What's wrong with such a perfect ending?”

Salamandhys fondled the Dawn Knife gently. “Although the saint a man who commanded respect, he had no good successors. They got worse by the generation, and the perfect country ended. Humans were almost extinct. The saint even braved the punishment by the Divine Realm to return again to Yangguang. His exhaustion of his life moved the gods, so they sealed away the enemy completely.

“The seals are in the seven Modas' Bottles, which were handed to the seven great dragon kings to protect so that the continent could regain peace. Although it wasn't the prosperous and flourishing land before, at least humans weren't in danger of extinction.

“I admire his selfless, self-sacrificing spirit the most. I didn't think that ten thousand years later there would be someone who had designs on Modas' Sealed Bottles.”

Nian Bing's whole body shivered. "If Modas' body is actually that important, then you should find it and bring it back as soon as possible!"

"Find? Of course I'll find it. But there's no need to be anxious about it. That despicable fellow used a transfer scroll to who knows where. So even if I devoted myself to finding it, it would take a while. Moreover, the seven Modas' Bottle are almost impossible to gather, so I'm not worried. I'll wait for us to leave here and search for it while eating delicious human food."

Nian Bing smiled bitterly. "Your thoughts are really queer. Choosing you to protect a Sealed Bottle was definitely those gods' mistake. Can you tell me what is sealed in that bottle? What sort of enemy almost wiped out humankind? The Saint had such a strong dynasty, could it be that there was an invasion by some tribe?"

Salamandhys snorted. "As I said before, it's best for you not to know too much. When you do know too much, you won't be able to safeguard your life. And I have no obligation to protect you. However, I can tell you this: the only one who could exterminate humans is humans themselves. This has nothing to do with another race. Just like how the greatest obstacle for a warrior's cultivation is their own demons. You humans are so disappointing, no one could help you. Okay, I'll give this Dawn Knife to you, your fourth cooking knife. Using such pure light element to make food will definitely produce a good flavor. Hehe."

"What? You want to give me Dawn so I can use it to make food?" Although Nian Bing greatly desired this light kitchen knife, but

Dawn had such a mystical history, also only item left by the saint to the human realm. Using it as knife was really too..., of course, that wasn't the main reason. This knife was even longer than Feng Nu's Heavenly Flame Sword and was also so wide and thick. How could this big of a knife be used as a kitchen knife? It might be a problem to manipulate, so he was suspicious of Salamandhys' good will.

Salamandhys lightly waved Dawn and said, "Dawn was historically powerful, but it needs the Saint to wield its true strength. Rather than leave it in my treasure pile, it would be better to let you use it. Using it as a kitchen knife isn't anything wicked, so there won't be a problem. This knife is very heavy, so if you want to carry it, it'll take some effort. Give your light element stone to me. This holy knife has existed for over ten thousand years, so to raise its level I'll embed the stone. After all, without the saint wielding it, it loses its spirit."

The Dawn Knife plus the Holy Light Stone would be far too strong. Nian Bing stared wide-eyed at Salamandhys.

Salamandhys felt impatient. "Hurry up. If you want to leave here earlier, give me that stone. I know what you're worrying about. Actually, could it be you don't know, that those three stones in the knives you possess were left behind 'by' the gods? Without the light stone in Dawn, how could Dawn compare to your knives? With the stone, if you can learn mimicry, the Dawn Knife will be just like your other three knives, a top-level magic wand, a light magic wand. Boy, just make me good food It will be very beneficial. As long as you satisfy my stomach, we can discuss everything else. Perhaps if you work hard for a 180 years, you could become another saint."

Patting the horse's ass is another way to say flattery

Chapter 67.2 - The Universe's Dawn

Nian Bing smiled bitterly. “Stop joking with me. I don’t want to be a saint, I don’t have a good personality, and I have no such grand pursuits. Can’t I just make you food? I don’t want to die.” While saying this, he took out the Holy Light Stone from his space ring and passed it to Salamandhys. An intoxicated light appeared in his eyes, and he looked up at the sky.

“Nian Bing, boy, don’t forget, I am the mighty Salamandhys, is there anything the mighty Salamandhys doesn’t understand? You are a chef, whether your character is good or bad affects the food you make very much. I have never eaten human food before; if your food wasn’t so good, do you think I would waste so much thought on you? To squander such consideration from the mighty Salamandhys won’t be any good for you.”

Nian Bing was surprised. He was about to say something when he felt his whole body shake. A scorching stream of air wrapped around him and sent him to the edge of the cave. In the next moment, Salamandhys was holding the knife in one hand, the stone in the other and began to chant. A strange language, like a low buzzing, began to waft outwards. His voice wasn’t loud, but the whole cave trembled. Salamandhys’ hands turned red and sparkly as his red aura began to pour into the Holy Light Stone and the Dawn Knife.

When Feng Nu was fusing the True Sun Knife and the Flame God’s Stone together, she had used a massive quantity of qi in the furnace that Hua Tian left behind. But the process was child’s play for Salamandhys. When the golden light from the Dawn Knife and the Holy Light Stone turned the same color as his hands, the knife

and the precious stone fused together. The slender but stalwart knife handle embedded with the Holy Light Stone didn't look disharmonic at all. It was like it always belonged there.

Nian Bing was sighing in admiration of Salamandhys' strength when Salamandhys suddenly shrieked. He threw the Dawn Knife, and in a flash of red, it appeared right in front of Nian Bing. He had no time to react, but his trigger magic scrolls activated in quick succession in a beautiful strobe of light. In total, four protective magic scrolls activated almost simultaneously, however they could not stop the red-jade light. It was a penetrating force that could not be stop by scrolls or spells.

The scrolls could not even alter its course slightly. An intense scorching sensation overcame him, and the knife pierced through. Nian Bing clearly heard his ribs shatter and smelt the acrid stench of his burnt flesh. At the same time, his life force rapidly decreased. Although it was stuck in the right part of his chest, the Dawn Knife was too strong. Paired with Salamandhys' strength, it lifted Nian Bing like a straw bag, stuck him together with the knife in the wall.

Nian Bing received such a heavy wound, but he didn't feel any pain. Because the knife was so hot, his wound immediately closed up so that not even blood flowed. He was at a loss. Why did Salamandhys want to kill me? Am I going to die like this? Everything ended just as the prospects of leaving here occurred, his life was taken away.

A red light flashed, and Salamandhys appeared in front of Nian Bing. He smiled strangely, still reciting incantations. He gripped

the handle inlaid with the Holy Light Stone, and a spell like waves of water encompassed Nian Bing. He suddenly felt warmth in his body. That Dawn Knife stealing his life was emitting a warm stream. His numb wound started to sting, then he felt nothing after the warm stream passed through him. As the pain rapidly disappeared, the light twinkled. His life force stopped dwindling and started to recover.

Salamandhys suddenly grunted and pulled out the Dawn Knife from Nian Bing's chest. As it was taken out, his wound was covered with a golden light; no blood oozed out. Salamandhys' expression suddenly became focused. Wielding the knife with his right hand, he continued with his crazy chants. Then a gold and blue light appeared, light and water elements simultaneously covered Nian Bing's wound.

Light and water were both specialized in healing. Combined as they were now, they were even more powerful healing agents. Nian Bing's wound was healed completely, not a trace of a scar left behind. Even his blood circulation and magic vortex weren't affected in the least. When the magic left his body, he slowly slid to the ground, feeling like he reborn. From life to the verge of death, then back to life. That feeling stimulated his mental state greatly.

He struggled to stand from the ground. After checking his body, Nian Bing angrily shouted, "Salamandhys, are you crazy? Although my life is in your hands, if you're going to play with me like that, it would be better just to kill me." He had no intentions to fight with Salamandhys as it was futile. He coldly glared at Salamandhys.

Salamandhys snorted. “You aren’t amusing at all, why would I play with you? Idiot, do you think that Dawn is something that anyone can use? I just forcefully merged your treasure stone and it together, but there was an intense backlash from the Dawn Knife. Fortunately the stone is one of the purest light element so the fusion was successful. But after it fused, it needed a baptism of spirit. Dawn’s owner was a human and I am a dragon, so of course I need your blood. You, boy, actually used a trigger magic scroll. You almost destroyed my plans. Luckily I used enough force. Now you have been acknowledged by Dawn. From now on, this knife yours. As for whether or not you can use it to its fullest potential depends on you.”

Seeing Salamandhys hand him the Dawn Knife, Nian Bing grabbed the handle skeptically. Salamandhys let go, and Nian Bing felt his whole body sink. Because he was totally focused on that feeling of being stabbed, he fell forward with the knife. With a pu! Dawn was halfway stuck into the ground, until he managed to stabilize himself.

Salamandhys took delight in his fortune. “Boy, making Dawn into your kitchen knife definitely wasn’t an easy task. Just take your time enjoying it. You won’t have any side effects with my rank 9 light and water magic. Except for your head exploding, you couldn’t die if you wanted to.” He looked at Nian Bing evilly. He already thought of a good way to heal him.

Nian Bing looked at the long knife. Although it could be that his spirit hadn’t recovered, he practiced knife arts for many, many years. His arms were much stronger than the normal person, but he actually couldn’t lift the Dawn Knife. Very obviously, Dawn’s weight was much heavier than it looked. He gripped the handle

with both hands, and exerted all his might to lift it upwards. He forced it level with his body. He was surprised to discover that Dawn weighed over a hundred jin.

Even if he used both hands, he couldn't brandish the heavy holy knife. He couldn't help but smile bitterly. "Oh mighty Salamandhys, if you wanted to hurt me, you didn't need to be so roundabout. This knife is trash to me. I can't use at all."

The golden knife light completely disappeared, like it was never there in the first place. However, Nian Bing could faintly sense that this holy knife seemed to have lost some of its metallic feeling, like it was made of pure light element. Such an unadulterated feeling as well as a massive divine aura made him calm down from his earlier shock. The Heavenly Flower Tile by his bosom felt much more peaceful, mutually shining with the Dawn Knife. It felt much more comfortable.

The light brought warmth, sweeping away his negative mood. Everything returned to normal, and Nian Bing's eyes turned calm.

Salamandhys said ill temperedly, "You actually said this treasured knife is trash. You really don't know anything. Let me tell you, this knife weighs 128 jin, two time the average 64 jin heavy sword. It is classified as a heavy weapon, and with your precious stone, this knife's light element aura is extremely thick. If you were to meet a dark attributed animal or a bastard like that guy who snatched Modas' Sealed Bottle, this Holy Dawn Knife will protect you. Dark or negative areas cannot harm you. Such a good thing is a matchless treasure yet you don't want it."

Nian Bing smiled bitterly. “I know it’s a great item, but don’t forget, I am a mage, not a warrior. Even if I was a warrior, perhaps there’s no one who could use a 128 jin knife.” Would it be comfortable for him to carry it? Although he was extremely unwilling to part with the Holy Light Stone, but he was even more unable to use this knife.

Salamandhys chuckled. “I’m doing this for your own good! You human mages always cultivate magic and spirit power, but you don’t know that you’re all wrong. Everything has its limits, including the human body. Simply cultivating magic power and spirit power makes mage’s bodies trained to the lowest level. You’re somewhat better; as a mage, at least you still have some activity. Ordinary mages have much weaker bodies than you.

“Because they fundamentally don’t understand that the body is the origin of everything. When your magic and spirit power is raised to a fixed level, an extreme burden is placed on the body. This burden can hamper your magic. To raise a simple example, you human magisters can’t easily use a forbidden rank spell, or a rank 11 spell.

“They obviously have the strength, so why wouldn’t they just use it all the time? If you asked, they will definitely tell you some nonsense about being afraid of the magic backlash. That’s dog’s ass. The magic you use is simply the display of your connection to the magic of the world. Except for dark magic which you need to sacrifice yourself, ordinary magic don’t have backlash. The backlash those magisters talk about is simply is the resonance between the forbidden spell and the magic element of the world.”

“The resonance with magic element?” Nian Bing looked at Salamandhys with surprise. Since he came to know the mighty Salamandhys, Nian Bing found that he kept discovering new areas of magic.

Salamandhys chuckled. “That’s right. It’s the resonance of magic. At that time, magic elements will produce a strong resonance. After all, it’s a rank 11 spell. Those mages took a long time to cultivate into old magisters and have shoddy bodies. How could they withstand the resonance? They would just be courting disaster, so they don’t dare use it.

“Conversely, if your body is healthy and robust, resonance will harm you less when you use it, to the point that you might not be affected at all. That way, not only can you use stronger spells, but at the same time, bottlenecks in magic power cultivation will be easier to break through. Didn’t you wish to learn a lot of magic from me?”

“Today, I taught you my own knowledge. So you need to take this Dawn Knife and train your body, so that your magic prospects won’t be limited. Since you can make trigger magic scrolls, you seem to have some future.”

Nian Bing thought over this carefully. He secretly felt that Salamandhys’ teachings were very logical, but his sparkling eyes made him feel uneasy. He looked at the Dawn Knife. He was indeed reluctant to give it to Salamandhys. After all, it matched with Morning Dew, True Sun, Proud Sky!

Immediately, he nodded. “Since this knife is already mine, I will

change its name. I don't hope to be a saint, so I will name this knife after my precious stone, the Holy Light Knife. But in order to commemorate that senior, I will call it the Universe's Dawn."

Salamandhys put his hands behind his back and nodded in satisfaction. "The Universe's Dawn-Holy Light Knife. It's a pretty good name. Okay, we should set out. Nian Bing, I'll help you train your body and safeguard your ring. So you carry the Holy Light Knife on the mountain range yourself. I think that after we get out of the Tian Dang Mountains, your body will be on a different level. You have made me several days worth of meals, so don't worry, I will help provide food for you on the road. Let's go."

His figure flashed. He didn't wait for Nian Bing to understand. His space ring already disappeared. Next, Nian Bing felt himself rocket straight up, almost weightlessly, out of the cave.

Chapter 68.1 - Evolution Of The Ice And Fire Source

Salamandhys smiled evilly. “Nian Bing, boy, don’t you get tired from doing something as easy as just making food? I’m helping you train your brain so that, in the future, you won’t be lazy and refuse to make me food. A mage training the body, en, that’s a pretty good choice. However, what I said was true; I’m definitely not lying to you. Wahaha, the mighty Salamandhys is really brilliant! My delicacies! I will have them!”

Salamandhys waved at the pile of treasures within the cave and, with a flash of light, Nian Bing was tossed over three hundred meters into the air. However, Nian Bing only felt his body tense up. He wasn’t able to figure out what was going on, even when he reached the apex of his trajectory, until he appeared outside of the cave. As soon as the outside world greeted his eyes, crisp air assaulted his face. Seeing that he was about land, Nian Bing quickly used his knife to lessen the impact when he did. When he looked up, he saw the outside world before him. Finally, he was no longer being punished by only being able to gaze up at the sky from the bottom of the well.

Salamandhys casually tossed a space ring around in his hands as he chuckled. “Now we can go. Don’t worry, you’ll only need to focus on walking. You won’t need to make me any food.”

As Nian Bing looked at the vast mountains before him, he smiled bitterly. “You’re really going to make me carry this knife? Mighty Salamandhys, will this method really be helpful to my magic cultivation?”

Salamandhys immediately adopted a stern expression. “Of course it will! I, the mighty Salamandhys, would not spot lies!”

Nian Bing hesitated. “If it’s really as you say, shouldn’t warriors be more suited to cultivating magic? But magic warriors are very rare among humans!”

Salamandhys snorted. “You understand ass. Warriors cultivate qi. While qi and magic do have certain similarities, both their cultivation methods and their applications in battle are vastly different. One is an internal cultivation, while the other is an external connection. When you cultivate qi, your body’s perception of magic elements will greatly change. Even if you forcefully cultivate both, you won’t achieve much. Of course, we dragons are strong existences that are an exception to this, but you humans can’t reach such a level. Thus, I said you would train your body, not that you would cultivate warrior skills.

When Nian Bing looked at the extremely heavy Holy Light Knife in his hands, an expression of agony appeared on his face. Carrying something that weighed over a hundred jin through the mountains would definitely not be easy! However, Salamandhys’ face was wooden. He waved his right hand at a large tree on the mountain top, immediately causing a sturdy looking branch to snap off. He grabbed the branch with his right hand, then swung it as if it were a whip. “Boy, if you wish to learn magic from me, it won’t be easy. I’ll teach you well, so don’t think that you’ll be able to slack off for even a single moment. If you do, I won’t show mercy with this branch.” When he finished saying this, he adopted a striking pose.

“But, Mighty Salamandhys, what if I’m incapable of doing it?” However, in the end, Nian Bing could only tell himself that it was all for the sake of his magic cultivation. He forcefully picked up the Holy Light Knife, then began his trek along the craggy mountain path, which was extremely hard to navigate. Lifting up 128 jin once was nothing to Nian Bing, but for him to carry such a weight while travelling on such a road was definitely not such an easy thing.

Perhaps the fire dragon people had already been notified by Salamandhys, as they didn’t appear while they were walking. As they continued on their journey, Nian Bing discovered that Salamandhys’ branch wasn’t just something that forced him to go forward, it was also his lifesaver. The mountain path was extremely precipitous, and Nian Bing was carrying the 128 jin Holy Dawn Knife. He’d lost his footing more than once because of the heavy weight. Whenever that happened, the supple branch would naturally wrap around him and would pull him from the brink of danger.

Salamandhys, contrary to Nian Bing, seemed like he was simply on a scenic tour as he walked behind Nian Bing. However, after being saved several times, Nian Bing suddenly felt that he didn’t loathe Salamandhys all that much. Right now, he had much more confidence in what he’d said before he’d begun the trip: his strength had been over exhausted, and his rough clothes had long-since turned to rags. However, he didn’t have the energy to care about such things.

Two hours after they’d left the mountain peak, Salamandhys finally said to Nian Bing, who was trudging forward, “Alright, it’s been two hours. We can take a short break.”

When he heard this, Nian Bing's first reaction was to immediately slide to the ground. The Holy Light Knife fell next to him, but he didn't have the energy to care. He simply lay flat on his back and gasped for air.

"Pah." A crisp sound rang out. Nian Bing, who'd been lying flat on the ground, snapped to and immediately sat up amidst the pain. He angrily said, "Do you want me to die?! Didn't you say we were resting?"

Salamandhys squatted down next to Nian Bing and chuckled. He took something about the size of child's fist out, then stuffed it into Nian Bing's mouth. Nian Bing felt a strong stench his nostrils when Salamandhys did so, but as soon as he thought about spitting it out, his whole body suddenly felt scorchingly hot, which caused him to subconsciously close his mouth. Salamandhys then patted him on the back, which caused the blazing-hot black object to slide down his throat with a burning sensation.

Nian Bing looked at Salamandhys in surprise. "What did you just make me eat?" However, as soon as he said this, his stomach began to churn, which caused a vile sensation to overcome him. Despite this, Salamandhys' ability prevented him from throwing it back up.

Salamandhys leisurely replied, "It was poison of course. Do you think really think that I'd give you something good to eat?" While saying this, he removed the pressure on Nian Bing's body since the black object had already been digested.

"Fuck." Nian Bing gave Salamandhys the middle finger. Despite

his actions, he knew that Salamandhys wouldn't be willing to kill him. "Poison is poison. Anyway, since you're with me, I'll be killed by your games sooner or later. It'd be better if I died because of poison. However, I'm gonna sleep first, even if I'm gonna die." When he finished speaking, he immediately laid back down on the ground and was about to rest, when all of a sudden intense pain overcame him.

"Aiyo!" Nian Bing immediately sat back up and looked at the branch that had already returned to Salamandhys' hands. His voice full of anger, he said, "What're you hitting me for, didn't I eat the poison?"

Salamandhys swallowed slowly. "I just wanted to help you raise your magic. Right now is the best time as, since your body's overly exhausted, it'll be easier to concentrate your spirit. Do you remember what I said earlier? 'Sense the mysteries of magic from smallest of places.' However, if you dare to lie down again, I won't just whip you once." An evil smile hung on his face as he continuously cracked the branch in the air.

After listening to Salamandhys, Nian Bing finally understood what Salamandhys meant. His mind immediately became clear, as if it had been anointed with the purest cream. He gazed at Salamandhys with heavy eyes, then slowly pulled his body into a lotus position. He tried to forget his exhaustion as much as possible as he focused all of his spirit onto the magic within him. Just like Salamandhys had said earlier, if he slowly absorbed the magic element in the air while using his spiritual power to focus on the fine details of his magic power, he could sense their mysteries. As soon as he entered a focused state, Nian Bing's heart leapt. He'd suddenly gotten an idea.

Salamandhys lazily sat down next to Nian Bing while watching him. He secretly thought, This boy has some talent at least. It looks like he's not as dumb as I thought after all. With some good practice, and that Ice and Fire Source as his foundation, he might really be able to grasp the mimicry ability after some time. If that happens, he definitely won't have to worry about being able to make all sorts of dishes. En, a seven-attributed mage is definitely the most suited to cooking with every element. It would be hard to taste the same thing twice, haha.

Salamandhys couldn't stop himself from smiling when he thought of this. As he smiled, his gaze towards Nian Bing became akin to as if he were already looking at a pile of delicious dishes.

At that moment, two streams of red and blue light rose up from Nian Bing. The two streams proceeded to wrap around him in a lazy vortex. Although the gathered magic element wasn't strong, the shape of the vortex was an exact copy of his inner Ice and Fire Source, though the speed at which it revolved was much quicker. Salamandhys was unconcerned when he saw this, but he suddenly felt the two revolving streams begin to slow down. When he was about to wake Nian Bing up, the revolving magic suddenly screeched to a stop. They then coalesced into two separate, dazzling balls of red and blue light on either side of him.

"No good, the boy's gone mad." Salamandhys flashed in front of Nian Bing, then lifted both of his hands at the same time. When he did so, the red ball of light split into two portions above Nian Bing's body, one of which moved to the other side of his body, next to the unmoving blue ball of light. Salamandhys really didn't understand what Nian Bing was attempting. Why had he stopped

his magic power that had been spinning so well? Wasn't this equivalent to suicide?!

When he sensed the magic inside of Nian Bing, he found that he hadn't gone mad from meditation. Rather, Nian Bing was doing this consciously. Did he want to die? No, that wasn't possible!

Salamandhys immediately vanquished the thought and continued to carefully manipulate the opposing magic within Nian Bing's body. He didn't believe that Nian Bing would choose death.

However, right now, even someone as strong as him didn't have a solution to the present situation. Salamandhys knew that, if he took away the energy he was using to support Nian Bing, Nian Bing's Ice and Fire Source would have a violent collision. If that happened, Nian Bing's body would be completely destroyed. Not to mention his mimicry rank 9 light and water dual-attributed magic, even it were a rank 12 super forbidden magic, it still wouldn't be able to mend a body that had been destroyed.

For the sake of his gourmet food, he could only continue manipulating Nian Bing's body. As he did so, his mind continuously churned. He was trying to think of any feasible course of action.

Time continued to pass, moment by moment. At this point, Salamandhys had been thinking for close to four hours. Although maintaining control over Nian Bing's inner energy wasn't exhausting to him, it was boring. He grew impatient, as, in these four hours, he'd gone through so many possibilities. However, even though he was the Fire Dragon King, he still didn't have

much knowledge about humans' Fire and Ice Source magic. He wanted to try to recover Nian Bing's magic vortex, but he didn't have any idea what would happen when the two opposing elements came into contact with each other.

Salamandhys was truly unwilling to let Nian Bing die like this. Even though they'd only been together for several days, Nian Bing's achievements in culinary arts had made him extremely pleased. It wouldn't be easy for him to find another specialized chef, much less one that was delivered right to door. Thus, even though Salamandhys was impatient, he still didn't have any intentions of giving up on Nian Bing. As such, he could only choose to hold onto the two portions of energy within Nian Bing's body. Salamandhys found that Nian Bing's spirit power had seemingly abandoned his magic control, and was instead completely concentrated on his head. Salamandhys had no idea what Nian Bing was thinking. Perhaps, he was also thinking of a way to get out of his current predicament.

What was Nian Bing doing? He, of course, had no reason to kill himself. The reason he'd stopped his Ice and Fire Source's rotation and forced himself into this impasse was part of an idea he'd come up with. He'd cultivated magic for many years, the Ice and Fire Source growing with him. However, he'd known that what he had wasn't the true Ice and Fire Source. The ice and fire elements simply existed in a mysterious balance. After using it for a while, he'd gained some understanding of its special characteristics, but in the end, he still hadn't been able to get rid of the underlying danger between the fire and ice.

Nian Bing had thought about how to solve this problem when he was cultivating the most. From Long Zhi and Hei Ye's pointers, as

well as the knowledge from the magic materials he'd read, he had a theory as to how he could succeed. With the added pointers he'd received from Salamandhys over the past several days, Nian Bing had become even more certain about his theory.

This was extremely dangerous for him, but at the moment, he had dragon king protecting him. This was naturally the most optimum situation to test out his theory. Nian Bing gambled that Salamandhys would hate letting him die, so he a small measure of certainty. Thus, as soon as he'd begun cultivating, he'd used his tyrannical spirit power to directly begin the separation of his ice and fire elements.

Was Nian Bing really driving out his magic power though? Of course not. Even though he'd abandoned the majority of his magic control, he'd left a single particle of the fire element and ice element in his glabella. At first, when he was researching how to resolve the issues of the Ice and Fire Source, he'd thought that the biggest obstacle would be how to implement it. However, when he Salamandhys had said to start small, by sensing a single particle, Nian Bing's eyes were opened. He'd currently focused his spirit power into his brain as he wholeheartedly sensed both the differences and similarities between the ice and fire elements.

Over six hours had passed since he'd begun cultivating. They'd left the cave at noon. Nian Bing had been continuously alert the entire time, with both his awareness and perception of ice and fire magic elements becoming stronger as time passed. It was hard for such a situation to appear normally as, during normal cultivation, thousands if not millions of particles are absorbed and released as the magic elements constantly circle the cultivator.

Even though Nian Bing was incredibly focused, it was impossible for him to only study a single magic particle. He let go of his magic power, and entered his current situation. He felt a mysterious sensation as he was studying the particle, and began to alter the ice and fire elements. He discovered that ice and fire particles were the same simple particles, they just had different properties. They were opposites in that ice was a steady element, while fire was more lively and continuously moving.

Chapter 68.2 - The Evolution Of The Ice And Fire Source

The stable ice element was much more suitable to swap between offense and defense. Moreover, because it could transform into water, it also had the life-giving properties of water. The vitality aura was water and ice's common property, just like light element possessed the aura of divinity.

On the other hand, the fire element with its frantic features was more suited to attack. It was the least stable of all the elements and possessed very strong energy waves. The wintry chill of ice and the scorching heat of fire were polar opposites. In case they were to meet, they would mutually reject each other or cancel each other out. If they were to have any joint properties, that would be their source. This was not the case for only ice and fire, but for any attribute of magic. No matter the element, in Nian Bing's mind they were just an extremely tiny point of light. He could only sense them by using his spirit. Although the attributes had nothing in common with each other, the size of their energy was completely the same. When he thought this, Nian Bing suddenly felt that his understanding of magic had become much deeper.

Any magic element was founded on the same amount of energy, but due to the different characteristics of each element, each kind of magic's attribute could be clearly seen in addition to the amount of magic gathered. On top of that, the attributes had different interactions with each other, which allowed the display of an abundant number of spells. The strength of spells, along with the purity and quantity of magic element were related.

For purity, the more of an element concentrated in a fixed volume, the more pure it was. The quantity of the magic was the amount of magic power that was embodied. Simply put, like the spell fireball, the more magic power, the stronger it was. In addition, the more compressed the magic power, the stronger the spell. The most important thing affecting magic power was spirit power.

Because the spells were so large in higher ranked spells, the differences between elements became larger. The spirit power mark between Nian Bing's brows only had one particle of ice and fire each. At the moment, their differences were extremely strong. If he could make the ice element become more lively and the fire element more stable, the two would reach a mystical balance. They would not reject each other. This was equilibrium, and what he was chasing after now.

When he thought this, Nian Bing's spirit shook because he finally thought of something related to how his Ice and Fire Source could rotate so that the two elements could coexist. That was because during the revolution process, the wildness of fire is contained, while the stability of ice element is shaken by the rotation. As result, they could live in harmony, and the balance was preserved. Could he use his spirit power to put them in such a state? If so, then from now on he would have nothing to worry about.

When he thought this, Nian Bing's Ice and Fire Source had unknowingly advanced into the second stage. Although it was far from the two elements mutually transforming each other into a completely different Source, but the danger of the Ice and Fire Source had disappeared.

Next, he wanted to test it. He used the single particles of elements to create an equilibrium. Using the control of his spirit power, he suppressed the fire particle and excited the ice particle. It was not so difficult.

Right now, Nian Bing could not help feel impassioned for his first master, Zha Ji. If Zha Ji hadn't urged him to cultivate culinary arts and raise his spirit power, making his magic place far above magicians at a similar level, how could he perfectly control his Ice and Fire Source?

Late at night. The Tiandang Mountains were much more silent. The active beasts and birds of the day time had returned to their dens and nests. The heart of the Tiandang Mountains was like spring because of Salamandhys' effect as a fire dragon king. This mountain which he had lived in for millennia had long since been dyed by his fire element and turned into a fire attributed mountain. In two hours, Nian Bing had covered a good amount of ground. The place where he was resting now was at a comfortable temperature with a night breeze carrying the moisture of the morning dew.

Although Salamandhys was in human form right now, his faintly discernible dragon qi was making all of the surrounding organisms keep far away. Right now he was very depressed. It had been over half a day and Nian Bing hadn't shown any change in his state. He didn't want to abandon Nian Bing. After thinking for a long time, he decided to try forcibly rotating it, but he needed the cooperation of Nian Bing's spirit power. If not, even if he could get the ice and fire element spinning, without Nian Bing's acceptance, everything would be in vain. But right now Nian Bing was practically asleep. His spirit power was completely focused in his

brain, not leaking out at all. This made Salamandhys even more irritated, itching to beat up Nian Bing to vent.

Just as Salamandhys had decided of taking a risk and stirring up Nian Bing's spirit power, his spirit power finally showed an extremely calm response. His spirit power split into two and flowed out from his mind. They separated into the ice and fire element. It seemed that Nian Bing planned on moving the two elements a bit. Salamandhys sensed Nian Bing's confidence and cooperated by letting go of the ice and fire element slightly. A fantastic scene occurred.

The two magic elements did not start revolving around the other element like Salamandhys had imagined. Rather, under Nian Bing's control, they gathered around his chest area. Gentle white light flowed out from his chest. This was the aura of the Heavenly Flower Tile. He had chosen the chest area for the second stage fusion of the Ice and Fire Source because of the stabilizing effect of the tile.

The two portions of spirit power did different things under Nian Bing's exquisite control. The fire became more still, while the ice became more lively. When they reached a perfect balance, the two elements wrapped around each other, completely fusing together. The stable state made Salamandhys gasp in surprise. The rotation gradually appeared, but the speed was extremely slow. Ice and fire element slowly intertwined at every point of contact, naturally flowing together, just like a pair of intimate brothers. There was no space between them, and no rejection appeared.

Seconds ticked by. Nian Bing used his spirit power to bit by bit, to

prompt his ice and fire magic into the fusion process. The fused quantity continued to increase, and the fusion results more and more perfect. Salamandhys finally understood that the seemingly weak in front of him had taken a step to becoming a strong.

The dragon praised him internally; he had never thought that in such a short time, Nian Bing could produce such a great breakthrough. He had used his well-trained control of the magic element to advance further. Of course, it was impossible for Salamandhys to know that the fusion of today was a culmination of Nian Bing's many years of hard work and research. Only because of his innate ice and fire constitution and his familiarity with the ice and fire element could he complete the second stage fusion.

When Nian Bing awoke from his cultivation state, it was already morning of the next day. He was soaked in sweat and was giving off an awful stench, but the instant he opened the eyes, the whole world seemed to change. Everything was so much clearer. He could even see the veins on a distant tree leaf, and the ripples of the feathers on the passing birds.

Everything was so wonderful. As long as he concentrated carefully, every kind of magic element in the air appeared in front of him so clearly. In his chest, a warm ball of energy slowly revolved. The red and blue were calmly flowing like a fluid, not attacking or rejecting each other, just indescribably snug. When he sensed the volume of magic power, Nian Bing was surprised to discover that in a single night, his magic power had improved enough to advance to the next stage; only a thin line separated him from becoming a true magic scholar. On top of that, the properties of ice and fire were deeply imprinted in his mind.

“Stinky brat, tell me, how are you going to compensate my loss of spirit power?” came Salamandhys’ mysterious voice. Nian Bing came to, only to see that the dragon was leaning against a rock, gazing at him.

Nian Bing gave an embarrassed smile. “Mighty Salamandhys, I didn’t think that this rest would turn so long. Don’t blame me for such a small matter.”

Salamandhys chuckled. “A small matter? I don’t believe it. I have lived for many millennia, and this is the first time I have seen a human who dares take advantage of me. You want to tell me you didn’t do that deliberately? You think that I will believe you?” He was a greater dragon that had existed for so many years. When Nian Bing’s Ice and Fire Source completely entered the second stage, he immediately knew he had been duped.

Nian Bing smiled, the embarrassment fading away. Reasonably, he said, “You can’t blame me for this! Think about it. From now on, you and me will be travelling on the continent together. If my magic level is too low, wouldn’t it make you lose face? What’s more, you said as long as my head didn’t explode, I couldn’t die. I want to grasp the mimicry ability as soon as possible, otherwise I can’t give you tastier things to eat.”

He spoke the words in Salamandhys’ heart. Salamandhys was naturally inclined to be haughty and proud. Nian Bing’s praises and the allure of his food immediately weakened the anger in his heart. He waved the branch from yesterday and pointed at the Holy Light Knife on the ground. “Carry it and continue walking.

Yesterday you had the gall to use me, so you were obviously not tired enough. Today you will walk four hours before resting. Everytime you rest, you cannot exceed two hours. If you dare use me again, I will directly explode the magic in your body.” He started walking away.

Sighing silently, Nian Bing knew that Salamandhys that accepted his suffering. Four hours was just four hours. His mood was very good now, and the Ice and Fire Source had taken a qualitative leap. Even if magic power could not strengthen the body, his Ice and Fire Source had leveled up. He hoisted up the Holy Light Knife onto his shoulder and strode after Salamandhys through the Tiandang Mountains

While walking, two problems appeared before Nian Bing. The most direct one was that he felt that the Holy Light Knife seemed to be not as heavy as it was yesterday. Although its pressure was difficult to bear, the weight seemed to have gone down. The other was that he was actually not hungry. It should be known that because of the cultivation yesterday, he had gone a full day without food. Magic power could not be used as food.

Nian Bing was a very bright man, so he realized the connection between these two points. He searched his mind rapidly and soon, he thought of the poison that Salamandhys made him eat yesterday. Although he had guessed that it wasn't real poison earlier, he didn't think it would have such an effect. Could it be it was some sort of tonic? Nian Bing was surprised. He looked at Salamandhys' back much more gently.

Nian Bing's relaxed mood did not last for too long. Although it

was not worse than a normal human's, the rugged mountain path was not something meant for a normal human. What's more, he was shouldering a weight of over a hundred jin. Perhaps Salamandhys held a grudge for taking advantage of him yesterday, but when Nian Bing fell he did not save him. Only when he was about to slip off the mountain did he use the flexible branch to pull Nian Bing back up.

His magic had progressed, so Nian Bing wanted to use magic to carry this heavy knife, but he tried it once and immediately gave up on the idea because of the tens of welts on his body from the whip of the branch. That was fine. Salamandhys did not oppose his use of his ice turned water healing spells. Otherwise, Nian Bing would have been exhausted by the wounds. When he thought of that sedan he had ridden, his heart contracted. The good days were not here. Right now he could only rely on his two legs.

Four hours passed and Nian Bing collapsed to the ground like a dead dog. Without waiting for the whip to hit his body, he hurriedly sat up. Before he went into meditation the same pungent item was stuffed into his mouth. Since he had already surmised it was a good thing, Nian Bing did not reject it. He obediently swallowed and was sent into meditation. While in meditation, his body's recovery speed would be much faster.

The days passed like so: In the first few days, besides meditating, Nian Bing was basically stuck in a state of half-consciousness. He often had trouble breathing because of exhaustion. He felt that he had dithered on the border of life and death many times. After five days, however, he gradually grew used to the lifestyle. As time passed, he was even more sure that the object that Salamandhys gave him was some kind of tonic, because every time he carried the

Holy Light Knife for several hours, his bones and tendons would be sore to the extreme. However, if he ate that pungent item and meditated, his body would at least be half recovered, his bones and muscles wouldn't hurt, and he wouldn't even feel hunger.

Chapter 69.1 - Fusion! Holy Light Knife

After five days, not only did the Holy Light Knife feel lighter to Nian Bing, but even his footsteps felt lighter. His most cherished advancement, however, was his magic power. Just as Salamandhys had said, cultivating in an extreme state of exhaustion had been beneficial for raising both his spirit power and his magic power. Now that he'd compressed the magic power in his chest, it felt more congealed. Nian Bing prodded it with his spirit power, and found that he seemed to have entered the Magic Scholar realm. However, he wasn't entirely certain.

Fifteen days after they'd left the cave, Nian Bing was currently carrying the Holy Light Knife as his robust figure followed Salamandhys. His voice full of doubt, he asked, "Mighty Salamandhys, it's been half a month so far, and I feel like we should've made it out of the mountains by now. Why haven't we?"

The past fifteen days of agonizing torment had transformed the normally handsome Nian Bing into a wild-looking man. His beard covered his once handsome face, while his golden hair tangled into a messy bush atop his head. And yet, despite his wild look, his muscles had become much firmer than they had been, and a just thin layer of dirt obscured his glistening skin.

However, the biggest change was that his eyes were now full of luster. They were now akin to a night sky full of stars; the hidden shine from his improved eyesight seemed to attract the eye. After the past fifteen days of anguish, the Holy Light Knife was no longer a burden to him. Even though he couldn't freely wield it, its weight was no longer a threat to him.

Salamandhys replied matter of factly, “Of course we haven’t left the mountains yet. We’ve been walking in a circle.”

Nian Bing stared blankly at him. “A circle? You’ve gone sick from laziness! No, no, mighty Salamandhys, what I meant is, aren’t you anxious to go out into the world and eat delicacies?”

The chill that had entered Salamandhys’ eyes abated when he heard Nian Bing’s second sentence. Coolly, he said, “It’s like the saying, ‘to do the best jobs, the artisan must have the best tools.’ I’m raising you so that, at the very least, you won’t shame me. However, there’s still half a month until we leave. Well, from now on our path will change, so.... Hm, you’re currently walking six hours before you rest. En, that’s a bit unfair to you. You’re indeed suffering too much as it currently stands. I’ll change six hours to two hours. What do you think? If I do this, you can’t say that I’m not generous.

Nian Bing blinked. “I didn’t mishear you? Six hours has really become two? This isn’t like you at all!”

Salamandhys lightly swung the branch in his hand. “Of course you didn’t hear wrong. I’ll also be adding one more rule: During those two hours, you can move forward in any way you choose.” As soon as he’d finished speaking, he slapped Nian Bing’s body with his palm. Nian Bing’s trigger magic scrolls had long since been used up, meaning that he had nothing to block Salamandhys’ claw with. As soon as his claw came into contact with his body, he felt like massive sluice gate had appeared between him and his magic power. However, at this point, he no longer judged whether

or not Salamandhys was strange. He simply looked up at him, his eyes full of mistrust, and waited for him to say something.

Salamandhys chuckled. “You can continue to advance, but remember, you’ve got two hours. However, this time around, I’ll be ‘encouraging’ you from behind.” The branch in his hands danced through the air and, before Nian Bing could respond, he felt several marks appear on his body. Intense pain, followed by a scorching sensation, caused him to immediately jump up. “What’re you doing?!”

Salamandhys look at him, his eyes full of displeasure. “I’m not doing anything. I’m simply helping you train your body. Don’t you want your magic to advance further? This will be the training you’ll have to endure for the next half month. Come on, stinky brat. You should’ve avoided my attack. Of course, you could use the Holy Light Knife as shield, just blocking is fine too. However, if you don’t move fast, this whip...”

During the next two hours, Nian Bing thoroughly ‘enjoyed’ the inhuman treatment he was subjected to. The fire dragon king encouraged him thoroughly. Almost nowhere on his body was left untouched. Fortunately for Nian Bing, Salamandhys was a bit lenient with his hits. When the two hours allotted hours had ended, Salamandhys have Nian Bing one of the stinky black things to eat, then removed the seal he’d placed on Nian Bing’s magic so that he could treat himself. After Nian Bing had finished treating himself, he meditated for an hour.

However, a human’s endurance has its limits. Despite the fact that he’d managed to endure the humiliation he’d faced in the

past, Nian Bing was no exception to this. On the third day of the love of the whip, Nian Bing decided that he'd finally had enough. "Fuck! Salamandhys, you're a bastard! If you hit me one more time, I'll fight you!" He immediately brandished the Holy Light Knife after saying this. Even though Nian Bing couldn't use magic currently, his eyes seemed like they were made of fire. The intense pain during the past few days had caused his spirit to crumble.

Salamandhys wave his branch and, with a crack, another red welt appeared on Nian Bing. "I'm whipping you, so what? What're you gonna do about? It won't do if you still want to oppose me."

Nian Bing's eyes instantly burned red. The past twenty days of abuse had finally pushed his patience to the tipping point. His mind was currently blank; all he think about right now was ripping the human-shaped dragon in front of him to pieces. He charged at Salamandhys like a hurricane. The 128 jin Holy Light Knife seemed as nimble as Morning Dew in his hands as he rushed towards Salamandhys.

The contempt in Salamandhys' eyes turned to surprise, as he'd found that Nian Bing had changed. Even though Nian Bing didn't have any qi, the Holy Light Knife had turned into a golden ball of light. And when Nian Bing swung at him, even he couldn't see any patterns in Nian Bing's attacks. Every slash was akin to the unrestrained attack of an antelope's antlers. However, every time Nian Bing slashed the Holy Light Knife, his strikes held the laws of the world within them; this was no longer in the range of a simple knife. Salamandhys was even faintly able to sense a dragon from the golden mass of light.

However, the golden mass of light proceeded to change into a dragon-shaped stream of light, leaving Salamandhys stunned. In the time that he was stunned, the Holy Light Knife managed to appear before him. When Salamandhys recovered from his stunned state, and noticed the Holy Light Knife, he was surprised to find out that he couldn't dodge it, as he simply didn't know how to. He'd seen many mystical knife arts during his millennia of existence, but this was the first time that he'd seen one like this.

Helpless, he could only let his red qi surge forth and surround his body in a fiery protective layer. Since he couldn't dodge, he could only use his superior qi to endure it. A fire dragon's qi wasn't gold, but it wasn't any worse than a martial god's holy qi.

However, as the Holy Light Knife swung towards him, it vanished and was replaced by nine ferocious golden dragons. They were all in different stances: Some were pouncing, some were charging, and some were spewing their breath. Despite their different stances however, they were all headed to breach Salamandhys' defense. What was even more unexpected, was that the golden knife had actually turned transparent. It emitted an indomitable aura, which caused Salamandhys to feel even more fearful. He suddenly understood that, even though Nian Bing had no qi, he'd touched the knife's soul. The Holy Light Knife was currently exactly like when it had been in its original master's hands. The golden knife shape wasn't qi, but the fusion of light element and the knife's soul. This strength wasn't something that could be created with qi.

As the sounds of friction continued, Salamandhys began to wonder if his defenses really could be cut by Nian Bing's slashes. He was only able to sense that the strange upsurge of light element

was headed towards him. Even though they couldn't harm him, he knew that the aura of the light element was intent on pressing forwards. If it weren't for the fact that the attack's energy was much worse than his qi, the aura alone would've been enough to wound him. He suddenly coughed lightly, causing fiery red light to surge upwards, in-turn sending both Nian Bing and the Holy Light Knife ten meters away. However, the round Holy Light stone instantly emitted a layer of golden light that covered Nian Bing from head to toe. Even though he'd fallen heavily, he hadn't received any wounds.

Nian Bing crawled up from the ground, but he didn't launch any more attacks towards Salamandhys. Instead, he looked at the Holy Light Knife in astonishment. For a while, he didn't have any idea what he'd just done. When the Holy Light Knife scattered golden light around itself, Nian Bing suddenly felt an extremely clear feeling, as if he'd just seen the dawn of a new day. Afterwards, he realized what he'd done. He'd used the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons. Yes, he'd used the knife technique 'Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons'! If he'd been using Demonic Engraving, Nian Bing would've naturally had much more control over the Holy Light Knife. However, the 'knife' he'd just used weighed 128 jin.

A knife over a meter long had actually been able to use a carving knife technique; what sort of concept was this? However, his current flexibility and coordination were now far higher than before he'd gone through the past 20 days. The moment he'd executed the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons, he and the knife had perfectly fused together—they'd become indistinguishable from one another. The Holy Light Knife could naturally show knife techniques constructed with pure light element, however his magic was currently sealed. As such, how

could he manipulate the Holy Light Knife's aura?

It was a resolution, his resolution to press forwards! There was no doubt that this was the treasured knife that had been wielded on the continent by the saint for over seventy years. Holy Light, oh Holy Light. You've finally acknowledged me.

Emotions welled up in his eyes, causing a filmy layer to obscure his view. This saint's knife, after more than ten thousand years, had finally found a new owner.

"What a great knife technique. What's it called?" asked Salamandhys.

Nian Bing muttered, "Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons. It's a technique that my first master handed down to me. Even if I say it you won't believe me, but it's used in the culinary world as a carving technique. In order to evaluate a person's culinary arts, you must observe their five aspects: Color, smell, flavor, presentation, and intention. What the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons shows is the peak of presentation. Salamandhys, thank you. If it weren't for your coercion, I definitely wouldn't have been able to display the Dance of the Gathering Rain Dragons with the Holy Light Knife."

"Thanks? There's no need for you to thank me. You'll be making me delicious things to eat from now. I don't have such good intentions that I'd help you for free. I'm fine even if you hate me. However, getting revenge won't be easy." His customary arrogance present in his tone, but there was also some humor present. When Nian Bing met his gaze, they both couldn't help but smile.

Nian Bing cast a glance at Salamandhys' branch. "Are we continuing?"

Salamandhys shook his head. "There's no need. Other than using superior qi, I can't use speed to hit you. This is a sign that your training is ending early. After we leave, if you have some time, swing around the Holy Light Knife. However right now, for a mage, your current body is enough. We can leave the mountains now."

Nian Bing stood up, intending to say something, but Salamandhys raised his hand. A thread of deep gold light poured into the Holy Light Knife. In an instant, the gold light moved to Nian Bing's body. As he was bathed in the golden light, Nian Bing's wounds healed rapidly. However, Salamandhys didn't put down his hand until the gold light had turned white. When it did, it almost instantly formed a hexagram. Salamandhys then proceeded to mutter a chant. His magic power was truly limitless, as a rank 9 spell gradually began to form.

White light expanded to fill the area, covering both Salamandhys and Nian Bing's bodies. Afterward, the white hexagram suddenly turned silver, and surrounded them entirely. As the light gradually subsided, and the air finally cleared, what remained was only a single silver point of light.

The strange feeling made Nian Bing feel like he was in a different world. His feet shook, and once everything around him had become clear again, he realized that the mountains that had surrounded him were gone. He also suddenly felt cold pierce him

to the bone, as he wasn't well clothed, but the winter chill didn't make him suffer too much.

Currently, there was a broad river in front of him. However, he didn't have any idea where they were; the river's surface had already turned to ice because of winter. Immediately going from the warm, spring mountains to this world of ice and snow made Nian Bing feel extremely uncomfortable. He was thinking about taking out his winter clothes from the space ring that Salamandhys currently had, when a giant ball of fire suddenly flew out from behind him.

The fireball, produced by the fire dragon king, Salamandhys, was definitely not something that could be described with normal terms. The fireball whistled through the air with an ear-piercing howl, before slamming into the frozen lake and exploding. Shards of ice flew everywhere from the explosion, and because of the scorching heat, the river began to bubble like a hot spring. Some cooked fish even rose to the surface.

Immediately afterwards, something slammed into Nian Bing's butt, allowing him to once again enjoy the feeling of weightlessness. His limbs flailed wildly as he flew through the air, before landing over three hundred meters away. He didn't have any time to react before he entered the river. Admittedly, Salamandhys' impressive fireball had brought the water to a boil, but the river was flowing. When Nian Bing landed in the water, the piercing coldness immediately sent him into convulsions, while the strong momentum of the flowing river swept him away.

Chapter 69.2 - Fusion! Holy Light Knife

The red figure appeared on top of the ice that hadn't been broken. Salamandhys's body was covered in a blue light, and the fast-flowing water beneath the ice actually stilled, so Nian Bing wasn't swept out of the newly created pool.

When he was learning culinary arts from Zha Ji, Nian Bing often played with the water in the the leisurely parts of the Sky Azure River, but it didn't mean he could just cruise through this frozen river. He desperately swam for the edges so that he could clamber up on shore. At present, he didn't even care about cursing Salamandhys.

“Boy, where do you think you're going? Clean yourself first. Otherwise you won't leave this river.” Salamandhys' only generosity was that when he kicked Nian Bing flying, he held onto the Holy Light Knife for him. If not, Nian Bing would have long since sunk.

“Y-you...crazy...bastard, th-the river is...so...c-cold, do you...want me...to die?” Nian Bing's teeth chattered violently, rendering his speech incoherent.

Salamandhys chuckled. “Relax; with me here you can't die. Not even if you wanted to. Hurry up and wash yourself, if you hope to eventually get out of the water.”

The cold seemed to have stopped his blood flowing. Forget about washing; even moving his body slightly was extremely difficult.

Just as Nian Bing despairingly believed that he was going to die as an ice cube, a strange thing happened. A hot stream suddenly flowed from his abdomen. The heat of the stream immediately filled his chest, greatly weakening the chill in his body.

Nian Bing's mind cleared up, and the hot stream gradually became more intense. When he looked down, he saw that his skin was actually glowing red. The bones of his body filled with heat, making Nian Bing feel even more comfortable. He treaded water then looked at Salamandhys with surprise.

“Mighty Salamandhys, what is that stinky thing you made me eat?” His body's changes could only be explained by that thing that he ate for over twenty days.

Salamandhys chuckled. “If I told you it was my feces, would you believe me?”

“You...” Nian Bing had realized that no matter which area, he was completely suppressed by Salamandhys. A greater dragon who has lived for millennia had an almost flawless mind.

“Don't worry. I wouldn't like to give you my excrement even if you wanted to eat it. Hurry up and wash yourself. You have been eating the snake gall of the iron thread snake, local to the Tiandang Mountains. It basically changed your body's essential character. The iron thread snake is well-adapted for living in the cold, but it's gall is much different than ordinary snakes. Not only does it not reduce internal heat, it is a very hot item itself.

“Now wash in the icy river so you can get rid of some of the excess heat, so you can absorb it completely. A hundred-year-old iron thread snake’s gall is not something an ordinary person could eat. It could easily kill several iron-backed land dragons. I caught them while you were meditating.”

Actually, Nian Bing not only ate hundred-year-old snake galls, but also several thousand-year-olds. This supplement had increased his body’s resilience to far beyond that of an ordinary mage. Perhaps even warriors could not compare to him. Although less tough than dragon scales, his skin and meridians were comparable to an ordinary greater dragon. In the future, this was main reason why Nian Bing would be called the mage who won’t stay down.

As he floated in the river, Nian Bing was frightened as he looked at the apathetic face of Salamandhys and recalled everything from before. Ever since they left the cave, even though he faced unimaginable hardship, everything was for his own good. He was at a loss. What did the mighty Salamandhys think of him?

He was sufficiently washed after an hour. A month’s worth of filth had been completely scrubbed away. On the banks, he used the Holy Light Knife to shave off his hair, and the handsome and confident Nian Bing reappeared.

“Here.” He threw a change of clothes out of the space ring for Nian Bing, then patted his shoulder. The seal on Nian Bing’s magic was immediately dispelled. As Nian Bing sensed the strength of the Ice and Fire Source Again, he clearly felt that he was stronger than he had ever been.

“It’s cold out. This is a river, so naturally there is fish. I will make some fish soup for you,” suggested Nian Bing, now in his clean clothes.

Salamandhys gave him a look. “What is this? You want to bribe me? I know what you are thinking; you don’t need to be grateful to me. I’m helping you get stronger not out of the good of my heart. Good physical strength will be beneficial for you rmagic so you can make even more delicious foods for me, and so that you don’t get tired. En, though you aren’t more handsome than me clean, you’re passible.”

Nian BIng almost died of anger because of Salamandhys. It seemed it would be impossible to hear nice words from him. He should just not talk at all. A dark cloud crossed his face as he looked at the self-titled ‘mighty’ fire dragon king.

“What are you looking at me for? Aren’t you going to make me fish soup? I haven’t eaten your food for almost a month; I really have a craving. Remember to make a lot; you know my stomach.”

“Mighty Salamandhys, I think that if you were to die in the future would because your stomach burst. Gluttonous dragon.” He walked up to the edge of the water.

Salamandhys rubbed his handsome mien. He muttered, “Aren’t I so good to this boy, yet he’s still getting more impudent to me. Never mind, who made him so worthwhile to exploit? Treating him well is as it should be.” Was he helping Nian Bing get stronger

just for a his stomach? As a fire dragon king who had accumulated a millennium's worth of knowledge, he naturally would carefully consider all the pros and cons. He would only take action if he was sure of his decision.

Although Nian Bing insulted Salamandhys out loud, he didn't slack at all when he was cooking. He used the few ingredients left behind in the space ring and the fish he snatched from the river with his flexible magic control to make a perfect Ice and Fire Eight Extremes Delicacy.

"Waah, so fish soup was this delicious. It's good, really very good." Salamandhys drank another mouth of the thick soup and felt comfort through his body.

Nian Bing also was not idle. He seemed to be venting all his dissatisfaction with Salamandhys into his food. He shoveled his own food down his throat vigorously. In the cold winter season, eating fresh and tender fish meat and delicious fish soup and side dishes, the flavor was indeed the apex of humans. His taut nerves were relieved by his cooking.

"Boy, right now we've left the Tiandang Mountains, about ten kilometers from Tiandang City. Should we go there? Where is the good food?" Salamandhys lifted up the iron pot and swallowed down the last mouthfuls of soup without table manners.

Dozens of ideas flashed through Nian Bing's mind upon hearing this question. Ever since he discovered that Salamandhys was not too big of a threat to his life, he had learned to loosen up. Obviously this mighty fire dragon king was using him, but it didn't

matter if he was using his culinary skills, or something else. It would be hard to shake off a dragon. Since that's the case, he might as well use him in return. Having a dragon with him was not necessarily a bad thing.

Nian Bing replied, "Mighty Salamandhys, there are five large empires on the Yangguan continent. The most populated areas are undoubtedly the empire capitals. The closest one to us is the Profound Orchid Empire's Profound Orchid City. I have never been there, but a prosperous area must have delicious food there. We should go to Profound Orchid City."

Salamandhys did not disappoint. He set down the iron pot and nodded. "Okay, let's go to Profound Orchid City. You human's world changes too quick. I remember just a couple centuries ago there weren't anything like five empires. You are more familiar with the situation than me, so you can arrange our food tour."

Nian Bing smiled. "Then leave it to me. I will definitely make the best plans; this trip will not be in vain."

Salamandhys seemed to not hear any deeper meaning in Nian Bing's words. He laughed. "Okay. Since we are going to the human world, don't call me 'the mighty', anymore. Just directly call me by name. This is the first time I've given this privilege to a human. From now on you'll be travelling me; perhaps one day I'll be happy enough to give you more good things."

"Salamandhys, as you know, my Ice and Fire Source has advanced greatly with your 'help'. I feel that my understanding of ice and fire has also gotten deeper. Could I learn your mimicry skill

now?”

He snorted contemptuously. “It’s still too early for you. If you want to learn my mimicry skill, you must be able to turn ice into fire and fire into ice. You’ve only scratched the surface. Every magic element has different properties. When you have time, learn to sense the special properties of wind and light elements with your magic knives, so that you will have a chance at training mimicry.

“Mimicry also requires a massive quantity of magic power, especially during interconversion. If your understand of magic elements is not high enough, not only would using mimicry not increase your effective strength, it will also consume many times the magic power. Without strong magic power, you don’t have the qualifications to train mimicry.

“In your current situation, you’ve only just managed to step foot in what you humans call the magic scholar realm. Magic scholars and magisters are vastly different. Can you use a rank 9 spell now? When you can use a rank 9 spell, you can use the Ice and Fire Source to cultivate mimicry.”

“Could I be able to use rank 9 mimicry spells one day?” he asked with a hint of despondency.

Salamandhys chuckled. “Of course, but that’s not for certain. If you have outside help, the requirements are slightly less and you could use it. Just, it wouldn’t be easy to obtain outside help.”

Nian Bing looked at Salamandhys' mysterious appearance and hurried to smile. "Of course, how could mimicry be something easy for humans to learn? Mighty Salamandhys, are there any shortcuts you could tell me about?"

Salamandhys snorted. "There's nothing to tell you. It's quite simple. Just raise your magic power and stabilize your footing in the magic scholar realm, and then you can try. The 'shortcut' would require to use special items. Of course, these special items must be extremely pure form of a magic element attribute. Boy, you sure are lucky. You already have four of them. Didn't I tell you to start sensing the light and wind elements?"

His eyes twinkled. "So what you're saying is that my magic knives and their precious stones can be used to help me gain the mimicry ability?"

Salamandhys said, "Of course. Do you think they're called precious stones for nothing? Any top level precious stone can produce energy and can raise your disposition for magic. Only right now, your magic power is far too weak; you can't really use them. But since you have the Holy Light Knife and that Proud Sky Knife as well as your Ice and Fire Source as a base, you can try to start practicing."

Nian Bing thought about it for a moment. "That said, if I could find a dark, space, and earth attributed magic knives, then I could cultivate mimicry with a magic scholar's strength."

Salamandhys nodded. "In theory, yes. Although it's not truly your ability that's producing the mimicry, using outside objects to

help you practice will make it easier for you to possess the true mimicry ability. However, do you believe that top level magic knives are so easily obtained? Besides great chances of fate, you might spend your whole life searching and never find one.”

Nian Bing smiled. “No worries, I still have time. It’s good to have a goal. Mighty Salamandhys, since you’re full, should we start on the road to Profound Orchid City?”

Salamandhys rolled his eyes. “Who said I was full; I need at least three more portions of this fish soup”

Nian Bing: “.....”

Chapter 70.1 - Near Marital Saint Light Cavalry Man

The dragon and human pair were now on their way to Profound Orchid City. Salamandhys didn't make any more trouble for Nian Bing, as they slowly meandered along the road like a pair of friends. Salamandhys never had a concept of time. He had lived so many millennia, so he only lived to enjoy life. Nian Bing originally thought of using magic to travel, but he was stopped by Salamandhys, who said he wanted to walk on his own legs to better get a feel for the beauty of the human world.

The wintry days marched on. A thread of warmth unfurled as the year entered March. After several months of rest and reorganization, the Profound Orchid Empire that had received heavy blows was in the midst of recovery. At least, they were on the surface.

“Nian Bing, how far are we from Profound Orchid City?” Salamandhys observed the budding trees on either side of the avenue.

Nian Bing smiled. “I just looked at the map; with our current speed, it'll take at most three days.”

Salamandhys was excited. “So I will soon be able to eat good food?”

Nian Bing smiled bitterly. “Mighty Salamandhys, haven't you eaten a lot on this trip? Forget about a going through a capital,

even if you pass through a small village you gorge for days before continuing on.”

On this journey, he had more belief that Salamandhys was helping him raise his body strength in order to continue making him good food. The moment they arrived at a place where they could purchase sufficient ingredients, Salamandhys had to stop and make Nian Bing cook him delicious food for days. Although it was very good for training his culinary skills, Nian Bing was more worried that with this speed, that he might not have time to go to the Harmonic Flower Empire to participate in the Rising Mage Tournament after delivering the letter.

However, he was slightly eased by the fact that since leaving the fire dragon’s cave, his advancement in magic was enough to send him frantic with joy, and he also even had a qualitative leap in his physical strength. Magic power cultivation required time, but he was already very pleased with his magic control skill as well as the potential use of mimicry magic.

Salamandhys eating well was certainly not anything bad. Every time Nian Bing met with a problem, as long as he made him a delicious meal with his heart and soul, he would definitely be able to pluck something he needed from that mouth. For Nian Bing, right now Salamandhys was a mobile magic treasure trove.

Salamandhys snorted. “Don’t forget that my true body is very large; of course I have to eat a lot to maintain my excellent physique. What about it? Are you dissatisfied with something?”

Nian Bing responded ill-humoredly, “There is nothing I’m

dissatisfied about. It's just that you are so wealthy, but every time you eat you use this puny human's money. My savings are no more. You should pay with your own money to fund our meals from now on."

"Ey, you stinky brat, you want to destroy the mighty Salamandhys? I have no money; I didn't bring a single gold coin. Didn't you say you could sell magic scrolls for money? When we get to Profound Orchid City, go and sell some."

Nian Bing's face showed signs of his long suffering. "I need magic scrolls to trade! I've already used up all my magic scrolls back in the Tiandang Mountains. You've eaten away all my money, so I can't even buy a blank scroll. How am I supposed to sell them?"

Salamandhys smiled like a kid, exposing his white teeth. "That's your problem; it has nothing to do with me. If it comes time and I don't have any delicacies to eat, you better be careful. I don't mind bringing you back to the Tiandang Mountains for more rounds of training. Anyways, I have the time to play with you."

"You..." Nian Bing knew he could do anything against Salamandhys' rascally nature. Against such a self-centered bastard, he could only be patient.

They were walking again when the sounds of carriage wheels and chafing on the earth came from the front. The sound gradually got clearer. Nian Bing raised up his head and saw what looked to be a caravan coming at them.

At the very front of the caravan was naturally the most popular component—mercenaries. Over ten mercenaries formed a ‘人’ shaped defensive formation in front of the carriage. The carriage appeared ordinary from the outside. There were over ten carriages, but there were actually over one hundred mercenaries protecting it. Based on the mercenaries’ appearance, they should be not bad, some high-grade warriors. It looks like [this caravan’s grease is quite thick!](#)

“Ee, Nian Bing, this is one of your human caravans.” Salamandhys was also looking where Nian Bing was.

Nian Bing nodded. “It should be, otherwise there wouldn’t be this many mercenaries.”

Salamandhys chuckled. “Our problem is solved. Aren’t you out of money? There are so many people here that there are definitely quite a few expensive things. You go and rob them, and we will have food expenses.”

Nian Bing stared at Salamandhys who spoke so easily. His voice rose, “You want to make me steal?”

Salamandhys wore a ‘yes, of course’ expression. “Naturally, if you don’t have money, you steal. Anyways, they were just going to spend it. We will spend it too. Same difference. Hurry up; you only have to steal enough money. How about this, if you do it, I will tell you the answer to the question you asked me yesterday about light element. It’s a pretty good deal.”

Nian Bing didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "But Mighty Salamandhys, I am a chef, or I should say a mage. I'm afraid it's inappropriate for me to perform daylight robbery. If we encounter an officer of the empire, I could not wash myself clean by jumping into the Sky Azure River. Right now, we are in the Profound Orchid Empire, if we became [rats on the street](#). We wouldn't be able to eat any good food."

Salamandhys snorted. "What's with all that rubbish? All that legal nonsense has nothing to do with me. I just now that money can buy food. Hurry up. If you don't, don't blame me for being impolite. Don't forget, I can take that puny life of yours at any time."

Although Nian Bing knew that Salamandhys would hate to kill him, he knew that if he did not go along with what Salamandhys wished, he would not be able to live well in the future. He sighed helplessly. Taking advantage of the caravan not paying attention to them, he hurriedly took out his magic reaper costume and put it on. He then put on a mask, and felt slightly better.

When he saw Nian Bing's dress up, Salamandhys broke into a laughter. "Why are you copying a clown? Hurry up; I'll wait here for you. Ey, what are you looking at. You think that the noble, mighty Salamandhys would do something as shameless as stealing?"

No words. You cannot be shameless, so you make me shameless instead. What sort of reasoning is this? Oh, that's right, you never had any logic. Nian Bing cast a snowstorm. Right now he did not have the protection of his magic scrolls, so he had to be more

Careful.

The distance between Nian Bing and the caravan shrunk. Nian Bing travelled in the center of the road, forcing the caravan to a halt. Salamandhys was already reclining by the road while watching the show.

The mercenaries naturally noticed this uninvited guest. Each of them took out their weapons, but Nian Bing was just a single man; not enough to make them nervous. Three people broke out from the mercenaries in the front, urging their horses to charge at Nian Bing faster. In a blink, they were right in front of him.

The middle mercenary was tall and looked to be a bit over forty years old. He wore the standard issue mercenary armor, giving him a very imposing and threatening aura. His bald head gleamed under the sunlight. He looked very rough around the edges, like a very straightforward person. "Friend, we wish to pass through this road. I must ask you to step aside." He was very polite. After all, the mercenary was just fulfilling his mission; no one wanted more trouble.

Nian Bing sighed in his heart. He deliberately made his voice a note raspier, "Cut the crap. If you pay me toll I'll let you go. I am a robber." This was his first time doing such a thing, so he could only come up with this line.

For the three old hands at the mercenary business, they knew that Nian Bing was a noob bandit just by listening to him. The two mercenaries in the side were about to take action but were stopped by the first mercenary who spoke. He rubbed his shiny, bald head

and said carefreely, “Brother, when you are at home you rely on your parents, and when you leave home you rely on your friends. Our Knife King mercenary troop will take you as a friend. Everybody calls me [Liu Lang](#), or by my nickname Gold-plated Knife. You can take this money.” He took out a small purse and tossed it at Nian Bing.

Nian Bing caught the purse and was surprised to discover that there were actually over ten gold coin inside. He couldn’t help feel suspicious; were bandits so well-received these days? He could get money with just words? That was too easy. Although he was thinking this, he felt good. This way he wouldn’t have to force himself to commit robbery.

He was about to get away when Salamandhys’ terrifying voice spoke in his ear. “That’s way too little; it’s not even enough for me to eat once. Their caravan is so big; this little money is no good. You go try again.” Although he didn’t know how he was hearing his voice, Nian Bing knew for sure that he was the only one who could hear him.

Nian Bing cursed Salamandhys’ eighteen generations of answers in his heart, but he could not refuse. He could only put on a brave face. “Brother Liu Lang, although you are generous, this is not enough to buy your passage.”

Liu Lang frowned. The reason why he chose money to buy his passage was mainly because this fellow had a faintly discernable intimidation about him. Liu Lang looked rough on the outside, but he was a very meticulous guy; he didn’t want to antagonize others too much. At the moment, the other party had taken his money

but still hadn't let them pass. Liu Lang could not help but curse this noob's lack of knowledge. He said calmly, "So you're saying you don't plan on letting us go?"

At this point, Nian Bing didn't have any hopes for good luck. He said coldly, "A thousand gold coins, and I will let you go. Think it over well." While saying this, he continuously chanted his magic. He stuck his right arm out to the side and a red, blue streams of light floated outwards. The color of the streams was not easily discernible. In the moment the three mercenaries were stunned, an explosion sounded.

Red and blue light immediately formed a giant ball of light on the ground on the side of the road, causing an intense explosion. Three large trees were even uprooted, and a giant hole appeared. Although it was a bit shallow, it indicated the strength of the explosion. Some of the broken branches had been scorched, or were covered in a layer of frost.

Nian Bing was secretly pleased. The leap in his Ice and Fire Source's power meant that he didn't need to use a different hand for each magic to bring out the strength of the Ice and Fire Source. Directly using a rank 1 Ice and Fire Source spell didn't even require a chant. With the effects of mimicry training, he even could use rank 2 Ice and Fire Source without a chant. Right now, Nian Bing didn't know if he resembled a mage or a warrior.

The unexpected happen. Nian Bing's impressive attack did not faze the horseback mercenaries, especially the middle one, Gold-Plated Knife. He was still calm and fiercely upright on top of his horse. He looked at Nian Bing, smiling but not smiling. "Your

performance is done? So you used Cold Ice Raging Fire Palm; I haven't seen that kind of qi in years. Good, good ,good! It seems you are worthy of a warm-up.” He pushed off the saddle, sending his tall form into the air before he landed heavily in front of him. The other two mercenaries' faces looked as if they could do with some popcorn.

Now that they were closer, Nian Bing carefully studied the mercenary in front of him. Liu Lang was taller than him by over half a head and his shoulders were extremely broad. At the moment, he had already taken off the massive machete from his back. Nian Bing was surprised to discover that this large machete was identical in every way with his own Holy Light. Liu Lang moved the machete like it had no weight and he pointed it at him. “Boy, come. Let's see whether you are worth one thousand gold.”

The opponent's calm and leisurely attitude made Nian Bing a bit nervous. He was no careless person. He clapped his hands together and the Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh and the Flame God's Roar appeared in either hand. Ice and fire began to leak from him.

With a chuckle, Liu Lang smiled, showing his teeth. “That's some good knives. It's well matched with your Cold Ice Raging Fire Qi. Come. Let me see how far you have cultivated.”

Nian Bing was sweating. His opponent actually thought he was a warrior. But that was good; his misunderstanding would give him more opportunities. He pushed off on his tiptoes lightly. Because of his comprehension of the ice element, the snowstorm he was using was invisible. Unless they sensed the air spinning rapidly around him, no one could tell that he was being assisted by the snowstorm

spell.

Gold-plated Knife Liu Lang's gaze suddenly changed. He slammed his right forward and gripped his knife with both hands. With a shout like thunder, his giant knife the same shape as Holy Light suddenly slashed down like lightning. A faint golden light arced straight at Nian Bing. The reason why he was taking Nian Bing lightly was actually because he knew of the Cold Ice Raging Fire qi. That kind of qi really did exist and was tyrannical, but because of the conflict ice and fire it was harder to cultivate to higher level, so he wasn't afraid of him.

Good profits.

Someone everyone hates.

Can mean homeless.

Chapter 70.2 - Near Martial Saint Light Cavalryman

Seeing the faint gold light from the knife, Nian Bing was shocked. He would never have thought that this rude mercenary in front of him was actually a light attributed cavalryman. Among the numerous mages, very few people cultivated light magic because it required religious offerings or sacrifice. There were even less people that use light qi, even less than dark qi users, not just because light qi was extremely hard to cultivate, but also because there were major restrictions to use it.

To cultivate light qi, you first needed to have a light attributed body. Normally, not one person out of a thousand were born with a light body. And that's not even if the main issue. Just having a light body means that cultivation of light qi is still extremely difficult. It has about $\frac{1}{5}$ the cultivation speed of ordinary qi.

In order to succeed in cultivating light qi, you must gain the approval of the light element. Ordinary people could not succeed because you need to have a generous heart and be straightforward and honest in everything you do. If you had the slightest impure thought, you would never gain the approval of the light element.

After fulfilling these two conditions, you may proceed cultivating light qi. However, if darkness appeared in the cultivator's heart during his cultivation, the light element won't hesitate to cast him away. Without the support of the light element, light qi was far too weak. Thus, to choose to cultivate the light element, not only do you need god-given talent, you also must have a perfect character.

On the Yangguang Continent, all people who cultivate light qi would be dubbed 'light cavalrymen.' They were coveted by all empires because they were just so trustworthy. Once in your employ, they would be your most competent hires. No matter the circumstances, they would never betray or do anything to harm you. Sadly, there were just too few light cavalrymen on the continent, and there were even less who could cultivate to higher realms.

Of course, because light qi is hard to cultivate, if you were truly successful in it, it would be much stronger than other attributed qi's. It worked best against dark qi. If a light cavalryman ever met an animal with dark qi, he would be able to bring out his optimum strength. Darkness could not hope to match against light qi, unless the gap in strength is huge. Even against other elements, light qi could rattle even the most indomitable of opponents so that they'd only be able to show eighty percent of their strength.

Thus, when Nian Bing found that his opponent actually used light qi, he was extremely shocked. But he had no time for regrets. While he was flying backwards, he put his knives forward. A light flashed, and an Ice and Fire Source spell appeared like before. But this time, the attack had the amplification effect of the Ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh and the Flame God's Roar. The effects were much stronger than they were before, and on top of that, this time Nian Bing used a rank 2 spell.

Nian Bing manipulated the powerful energy of ice and fire splendidly. When it came in contact with the light qi, it created a three-layer explosion. This was a show of Nian Bing's brilliance; he used his magic power, which just entered the magic scholar realm, to create three layers with his magic, so that even that even when

he wasn't using his chance, he could make his attack stronger. The layered magic required much magic power, but it's strength was astonishing.

An ear-piercing disharmony and an intense explosion blended together to make a truly horrible sound. A large impact force hit Nian Bing, making him shake. He felt a warmth surge from the impact because of the aura of light. Fortunately, he was able to respond quickly. After he launched that giant explosion at Liu Lang's knife, the power of the incoming slash decreased greatly. All he had to do was jump backwards to dodge the qi-coated knife.

"Good. It really is not easy to cultivate Cold Ice Raging Fire qi. Why would you become a robber? Come and be a mercenary, hahaha." Liu Lang did not follow-up with another attack. He shouldered his giant machete and looked at Nian Bing.

Nian Bing finally realized why Liu Lang was called Gold-Plated Knife. His knife seemed to sparkle gold when it was covered with light qi. It really did look gold-plated. "Brother Liu Lang, don't you know that your smile is very ugly; you should brush your teeth."

His cackling stopped and he shut his mouth, hiding large, yellow incisors. Angrily, he retorted, "I really hate people who talk about my teeth the most. Run away, little bandit. I don't want to kill anyone."

Nian Bing pointed both of his magic knives down at the ground and replied calmly, "But I need to steal." Liu Lang's strength had already excited his competitive spirit. Right now, even if Salamandhys did not make his request, he would want to have a go

against this light cavalryman. “I just don’t understand. You are a magnificent light cavalryman; why are you working as a mercenary?”

“I also don’t understand why someone with impressive Cold Ice Raging Fire Qi would be working as a robber. According to what I know, your family should be quite wealthy.”

Nian Bing did not explain. While mobilizing his magic, he started to chant. With the current distance, he should have enough time to recite a rank 4 spell. He chose a fire spell that would pair well with his snowstorm for an Ice and Fire Source attack. At rank 4, the Ice and Fire Source was quite impressive.

Actually, based on the present situation, Nian Bing would still suffer a loss. After all, he was a mage, not a warrior. When a mage and warrior were facing off, the outcome was terrible for a mage if he didn’t have scrolls because chanting required time.

Nian Bing chanted very quietly so that Liu Lang could only see his lips move. Red streams began to swirl towards True Sun. Nian Bing’s eyes flashed, and two beams of cold light shot out from behind his skeleton mass. He lifted both his hands and mobilized the snowstorm and his fire wall spell. With one above and one below, he charged at Liu Lang.

When Liu Lang saw the incoming attack, his eyes showed faint surprise. Since when did Cold Ice Raging Fire become this versatile? “Boy, you’re pretty good!” He jumped up, and the gold light from his knife spread to cover his whole body like golden fire. At the same time he slashed his knife, just this time, he did it

horizontally.

Golden light seemed to split the sky and earth. Nian Bing only had time to make his Ice and Fire Source explode when that golden light came crashing down. There seemed to be a silver line where the golden light met with his own spell. He was shaken; he had no more time to think or even time to turn around. He simply propelled himself backwards as fast he could.

The air seemed to have stilled for an instant. The explosive force of his spell was indeed high, but no matter whether it be the frigid ice or the scorching fire, when they met the silver edge of the golden light it was automatically driven to the sides, like that giant knife was cutting through a piece of firewood. At the same time, the knife light continued forward, instantly chasing after Nian Bing.

What could Nian Bing do now? He had no way of using his magic. He simply had no time to accumulate magic power, even for a rank 1 spell. At the most critical moment, he responded quickly. He swung both of his magic knives simultaneously; one blue and one red arc of light formed in front of them and directly clashed with the incoming knife.

The Ice and Fire Source combined two extreme magics together, so its effective strength could not be matched by a single attribute magic. Although Liu Lang's light qi had smoothly cut apart Nian Bing's magic, it wasn't as easy as it looked. The incoming knife was on its last legs.

Nian Bing's hands shook; the ice and Snow Goddess' Sigh and the

Flame God's Roar were forced out of his hands, and the last remnants of the golden light still slashed his chest. He felt a warmth there, and the impact force was enough to send him flying over ten meters away, but no fresh blood spurted out. Nian Bing who was familiar with the special properties of skin was very thankful for Salamandhys right now. If it weren't for that month of torment, he might have been sliced right open.

The light qi, at the end of its life, was only able to cut open his clothes and leave a very faint mark on his chest portion.

Nian Bing rejoiced, and even that Liu Lang was surprised. He didn't think that seventy percent of his strength would not be enough to decide the fight. His robust form showed speed incongruent with his figure. In the next moment, he was already right in front of Nian Bing. He pointed his machete at Nian Bing neck.

Nian Bing wanted to resist, but Liu Lang suddenly retreated backwards three steps like he had seen a ghost. For the first time, he was rattled and he showed it. His eyes were fixed on Nian Bing's chest and his whole body trembled and didn't attack again.

Nian Bing of course didn't understand why he stopped, but he wouldn't let go of such a chance. He clapped his hands together and rapidly attacked with a rank 2 Ice and Fire Source Magic spell.

With danger approaching, Liu Lang almost subconsciously reacted. He waved his machete to produce a gold-silver screen of light, stopping the peculiar spell.

Nian Bing, of course, didn't hope that his attack would harm him. He just took the chance to crawl back up and run over to where Salamandhys is. "Oh mighty one, he is a martial saint. If you want to eat good food you'll have to help."

Salamandhys finally appeared, but he was blocking Nian Bing's escape route. He knocked on his head. "Idiot, idiot, what are you doing?"

Nian Bing shouted, "Didn't you see his holy qi? Can I face off against a light cavalryman with holy qi? He definitely is no ordinary mercenary."

Salamandhys snorted. "Idiot, do you have no confidence in yourself? If you hadn't spent all your time quibbling and directly used your strongest magic, he might not even be able to contend against a rank 7 Ice and Fire Source spell. Who told you to engage in close combat with him, did you want to die? Don't unduly undervalue yourself. Although it's a rank 7 spell, don't forget that your Ice and Fire Source greatly increases your attack power. You had the chance to suppress your opponent. Now that you threw away that chance who is to blame? I won't act; I have nothing to do with the squabbles of humans."

Nian Bing sweatdropped internally. He knew that Salamandhys couldn't act against humans as he wanted, but what could he do now? When he saw Liu Lang's qi, it seemed to be almost on the same level as Feng Nu's, just entered into the martial saint realm. However, he didn't have a good as a weapon as Feng Nu, and his holy qi was slightly worse than Feng Nu's. Still, Nian Bing was a

mage. Even if what Salamandhys said was not wrong, would Liu Lang give him a chance to chant his spell?

He turned around helplessly after summoning the Universe's Dawn-Holy Light Knife from his space ring. Right now he could only walk, step by step, while quietly saying the chant for a snowstorm. At least that way he could run away faster. However, the next thing that happened shocked him. Liu Lang did not attack him. He raised his head, and Nian Bing saw a weird expression in his eyes. Suddenly, he turned around and spoke to his companions. "Go get him a hundred purple-gold coins." Then he got back on his horse.

Nian Bing stared. Did he hear wrong? He was making his servants give him a hundred gold coins; that was much more than his original demand for one thousand gold coins. He obviously held the dominant position, so why would he want to give him money? Could it be that he was shook by Salamandhys? But that was impossible! Salamandhys did not show off his strength.

Nian Bing's thoughts were a mess. Liu Lang's companions also didn't understand. The one on the left asked, "Big Brother, you didn't do anything wrong, why are you giving him a money? One hundred purple gold coins is no small amount."

Liu Lang glared at him. "I have manners. Go and get it. It'll be my own money."

The subordinate seemed very fearful of him, not daring to speak again. He turned his horse around and raced back to the caravan.

Liu Lang looked at Nian Bing, surprise in his eyes because he saw the dazzling golden Holy Light Knife in Nian Bing's hands. At the moment, Nian Bing couldn't think of why Liu Lang was doing this and picked up his Morning Dew Knife and True Sun Knife.

“Little Brother, you've come.” Liu Lang said to Nian Bing warmly.

Chapter 71.1 - The Use Of The Heavenly Flower Tile

Nian Bing held his three knives. Since Liu Lang stopped attacking, his life wasn't in danger. He raised his head and looked at Liu Lang. "How do you know I'm younger than you?"

Liu Lang laughed heartily. "Your voice is obviously feigned. You could fool ordinary people, but to fool me? It won't be that easy. Now come here; I won't hurt you. Just take it as your robbery being successful. Just think, this is the first time that I, Gold-Plated Knife Liu Lang, have been robbed in my entire life. Ai, what loss of face!" His eyes were locked onto Nian Bing's chest while he was talking.

Nian Bing subconsciously followed his gaze and saw that his clothes had been torn apart around his chest area, exposing the Heavenly Flower Tile hanging on his neck. The mutton-fat jade shone with the luster of gems. His heart thudded; immediately he understood. He resumed speaking but in his normal voice, "You know the owner of this tile?"

Liu Lang nodded. "It belongs to my sister-in-law; how could I not recognize it? Boy, since you possess this tile you should recognize me. Why would you try to rob me? Tell me, what is your relationship with her?"

Nian Bing snorted. "Aren't you afraid that I stole this tile? Since I came here to steal, I couldn't be a good person."

Liu Lang laughed, again exposing his yellow canines. “You jest. That’s the funniest joke under the heavens. Barely anyone on the continent could steal anything from my sister-in-law, much less you. You couldn’t even beat me, forget stealing from her. Okay, since you don’t want to say anything, I won’t ask you anything. Anyways, this is just me giving face to the owner of the tile. At worst, I can get my money back from her.”

At the moment, Liu Lang’s subordinate had returned on horseback. His horsemanship was exquisite; when he arrived beside Liu Lang, he gave him a large sack. Liu Lang threw the sack at Nian Bing. “Take it; it’s yours. Don’t rob anyone else; that’s no good. If you lose your life, your family will be sad.”

Nian Bing caught the sack, his eyes flashed. This talk of family reminded him of his parents and the owner of the Heavenly Flower Tile. The person he was robbing was actually Aunt Yu’ brother-in-law. No, no way. How could he use this money? In his heart, Yu Ru Yan, who gave him the Heavenly Flower Tile, was one of his most respected people. Although Nian Bing usually didn’t get caught up on the details, he extremely treasured the people who showed kindness to him.

He threw back the sack. “Since you’re her brother-in-law, I don’t want this money. You can go.” He turned back to run over to Salamandhys.

A figure flashed. Liu Lang, who just caught the sack, was shocked as he felt a light hand. Next thing he knew, the sack disappeared. Salamandhys was weighing the sack in his hand and chuckling. “Not bad, not bad. It really is quite a good sum! Enough to eat for a

while. Why wouldn't you want something people are giving you? If you want it, then take it. If you don't, don't. If you don't want it, I do."

Nian Bing turned around, looking at Salamandhys with a complicated expression. Suddenly, it seemed like he had decided on something. Resolutely, he said, "Salamandhys, return it to them. We cannot take that money."

Salamandhys snorted. "When it comes to you begging me, you think I'll do as you say? I insist."

"Salamandhys, return the money to them. Even if I have to beg on the streets, you will definitely eat your fill." Nian Bing's expression was calm, but his voice was laced with a threat.

Salamandhys' heart jumped slightly. This was the first time he had seen so serious; even when he was initially threatening his life, he didn't show such an expression. He frowned slightly. "Beg, how much money can you get by begging?"

Nian Bing planted himself in front of Salamandhys and said quietly, "Return the money to them. I can if I sell Morning Dew."

Salamandhys' eyes flashed with shock and alarm. In the time that he had been with Nian Bing, he had come to know very well that Morning Dew and True Sun were Nian Bing's most treasured items. For him to willingly sell Morning Dew because of a bit of spare change from an outsider, it was obvious that he placed extreme importance on this. Salamandhys did not protest again

and disdainfully threw the sack back at Liu Lang. “Fine, if you want to play a good person than do what you want. Anyway, it’s fine as long as I eat my fill.” He walked ahead without looking back.

Liu Lang was still shook. He couldn’t see what Salamandhys’ movements. If he wanted his life, he wouldn’t stand a chance at dodging him. What sort of fearsome strength is this! Perhaps even his older brother couldn’t attain such strength. Could it be the red-haired youth was a descended god?

Nian Bing bowed deeply to Liu Lang. “I apologize. I didn’t know that you were a friend of Aunt Yu’s. Please forgive me for all my transgressions from before. I’m sure we’ll meet again someday.” He then followed after Salamandhys. Right now he felt like he had just achieved his proudest accomplishment. Even Salamandhys had been moved. Aunt Yu, please do not blame me. How are you now? Are you doing well?

The caravan moved on. Liu Lang didn’t chase after them with his questions, but he noticed one particular detail. All of the horses trembled slightly when Salamandhys and Nian Bing passed by them. They only recovered their ability to walk after they passed them. He couldn’t guess Nian Bing and Salamandhys’ history, but right now he had full confidence that the two really had the ability to steal from the people he was protecting. He was also entrusted with a very important task, so though he was curious about Nian Bing’s past, he didn’t have time to investigate it. Everything could wait until he had finished the task.

Salamandhys was actually hiding his aura, but horses were very

sensitive animals. The horses smelt the faint aura of dragon surrounding him, so despite their long years of training, they were still intimidated by Salamandhys' aura.

“Nian Bing, do you know them?” Salamandhys finally asked after an hour of walking. Nian Bing remained taciturn the entire time. Naturally, his arrogance forbade him from speaking at first, but in the end he couldn't stand the silence.

Nian Bing shook his head. “I don't know them. Salamandhys, remember that I told you, when I was first starting out cultivating the Ice and Fire Source, the Heavenly Flower Tile saved my life. Without that tile, I might have died back then, and I definitely would have no way of cultivating the Ice and Fire Source. The light cavalryman knew the owner of the tile, so I truly couldn't steal from them. But there is a thing I lied to you about. The Ice and Snow Goddess' Stone on Morning Dew is the last thing my mother left to me, so I really would not sell it. However, don't worry; I'll definitely make sure you have food to eat. After we get to Proud Orchid City, I will work as a chef in a restaurant so that supplying food will be no problem.”

Salamandhys suddenly grabbed Nian Bing's shoulders and chuckled. “I knew that you weren't willing to sell it. I'll let it go this time. Anyways, as long as I have food to eat, it's fine. But in the years I haven't associated with humans, I never thought that you humans became this strong. What level of warrior was that guy we just ran into? Based on his attire, he looks like a normal warrior.”

Nian Bing gave him a look. “If he was an ordinary human

warrior, perhaps that Divine Realm of yours won't be able to stay a secret for much longer. There are probably no more than ten of that level of light attributed cavalryman on the continent. He's very close to being a martial saint in strength. I don't have much understanding of the warrior cultivation levels, but up to now, Gold-plated Knife Liu Lang must have been the third martial saint I've seen. What sort of standing did you say human warriors had?"

Salamandhys chuckled. "So you're saying that the caravan he was leading definitely was transporting some good stuff. Otherwise, why would they dispatch a martial saint?"

Nian Bing nodded. "Perhaps that is so. Being a mercenary isn't such a noble profession. The most skilled of martial arts normally wouldn't become a mercenary. He called them the Knife King Mercenary Group, but I think that that's very possibly a lie. As for what they're transporting, I can't quite guess, but it must be something incredibly precious."

Salamandhys turned back to look at the retreating silhouette of the caravan. "What a pity, what a pity. This time will be regarded as giving you face. But I want to eat the Ice and Fire Eight Extremes Delicacy. You should know that I like eating fish the most."

"Okay, no problem. When we get to Proud Orchid City I will definitely think of a way for you to eat your fill."

As they got closer to the capital of the Proud Orchid Empire, Proud Orchid City, the number of people passing by gradually increased. There were people wearing simple yet clean clothes, but the majority were wearing tattered cloth, sallow, sunken faces. No

questions were needed to be asked to know that this was a result of the war. In war, the most unlucky were the commoners.

“Nian Bing, I’m hungry.” Salamandhys plastered himself to Nian Bing’s side like a child.

He smiled bitterly. “Didn’t you say that you normally could go months without eating anything? I think you’re not really hungry, just craving.”

A chuckle. “How do you know me so well!? Anyway, it’s fine as long as you help me solve this problem. En, that’s right. I will catch some wild animals and you can roast them for me.”

Nian Bing shook his head. “Don’t do that. We should be close to Proud Orchid City. When we get there, we should settle down first and then get some food. You just need to be patient for a bit.”

“Patient? I have already waited three days. That’s fine for you; eating rations whenever you want. For me, I haven’t even had anything to put in my mouth. Proud Orchid City, huh. We will go there right now.” A familiar yet not understood chant came from next to Nian Bing. Without care for the ordinary people around him, Salamandhys’ chant brought a silver light to envelop them, and he and Nian Bing flashed away.

“This should be the right direction,” said Salamandhys into Nian Bing’s ear.

Nian Bing found that right now he was located in a strange space. His surroundings were flashing silver, and he was unable to see anything clearly. “How should I know; I don’t even understand what’s happening now.”

He chuckled. “It should be right, but I haven’t used space magic in a while, so I’m a bit out of practice. I hope I went in the right direction.”

A silver light twinkled, and the environment manifested. Nian Bing was shocked to see that there was nothing around him except for Salamandhys. He looked down subconsciously and was stunned for a moment. Then an intense sensation of weightlessness passed through him.

Thud. He fell onto the ground heavily, scattering the passersby around him. All of them looked at him in shock.

He fell down heavily, feeling like his whole body had been scattered. Nian Bing jumped up from the ground and cursed. “Salamandhys you bastard, what nasty magic is this.”

The silver light enveloped him again and to the stunned amazement of the people around him, he disappeared in thin air. When he appeared again, he was in a deserted corner without any people.

Salamandhys appeared in front of him and chuckled. “My apologies. It was my mistake; I forgot that you couldn’t fly so I teleported us in the sky. It’s good that the thirty meter fall didn’t

kill you. It would be hard to say if it was three hundred meters.” Originally Nian Bing didn’t have any time to check his surroundings, floating in the air as he was. Naturally when the space magic dissolved, he would fall down. But to his surprise, except for a minor ache, he didn’t feel anything major happened from his thirty meter drop. Was this a human’s body?

“Serves you right. Who told you not to give me anything to eat for several days. This was letting you off easy. Next time around I’ll do it higher. This should be what you called Proud Orchid City, so think of a way to get me food to eat.”

Nian Bing focused on his surroundings. As expected, this was obviously a city, with buildings a completely different style than the ones in the Ice Moon Empire. Most of the Ice Moon Empire structures focused on having a pointed roof; here there were less tall buildings. The majority were flat-roofed one stories. He poked his head around the bend to take a look. There were many people passing by on the streets, but there was an astonishing amount of beggars. Almost every ten, twelve meters were one or two beggars sitting by the road side. Was this the capital of the Proud Orchid Empire? How could it have fallen to this extent?

Nian Bing somehow didn’t know that among the five empires of the Yangguang continent, the Proud Orchid Empire was surrounded by the other four. Besides the Ice Moon Empire, the bordering Lang Mu Empire, Harmonic Flower Empire, and the Qi Lu Empire were hungry tigers gazing at a prime cut of meat. But the major empires were mutually checking each other, so when added with the Ice Moon Empire’s favor for the Proud Orchid Empire, they managed to not get destroyed. However, their territories were much smaller than initially.

Chapter 71.2 - The Use Of The Heavenly Flower Tile

After receiving the harassment of the three empires for years on end, the Profound Orchid Empire directed most of its attention to war. Its production strength and resources were also largely devoted to the military sector, slowing down the Profound Orchid Empire's development. The Ice Moon Empire was much stronger than Profound Orchid, not to mention the Harmonic Flower Empire.

The gap between poor and rich sharply differed between territories in the empire. Areas closer to the Ice Moon Empire were much more prosperous, while those closer to the south, Harmonic Flower and Qi Lu were much more destitute. Profound Orchid City was at the center of the empire. It was a lot worse than Crow Orchid City, but it occupied more land.

“Eat what? Quickly bring me anywhere with delicious food!” Salamandhys was a dragon that didn't like waiting at all.

“Okay, you can eat until you die. I still have ten gold coins Liu Lang gave me that day. It should be enough for several meals. Let's go and find a restaurant.” They walked around the corner, and Nian Bing decided on a direction. He led Salamandhys closer to the center of Profound Orchid City. That was somewhere that must have places to eat.

As they neared the center of the city, the number of beggars decreased and the shops increased. Although the scale wasn't all that big, it was at least somewhat flourishing.

They hadn't walked far when they finally spotted a restaurant. Without waiting for Nian Bing's prompt, Salamandhys walked in. The building looked plain from outside; there weren't even people waiting to attend them at the entrance. When the two entered the restaurant it was close to noon. The number of guests reached about seventy percent capacity. Nian Bing pulled Salamandhys to a table near the window.

Salamandhys was most interested in human restaurants. He looked left and right, focusing particularly on the dishes on other tables. He started salivating.

"Hello, what would you like to order?" A waiter came up to them.

Nian Bing and Salamandhys looked to be almost the same age. Although they had different temperaments, the two were handsome. A subdued aura of dominance leaked from Salamandhys. Because Nian Bing cultivated magic, he exuded a faint noble aura despite his plain clothes.

Salamandhys answered impolitely, "Whatever you have that is good. Make it about ten person's portions."

"Ten people?" The waiter looked at him with surprise.

Salamandhys said impatiently, "Go on with you. Hurry up. Are you scared we don't have enough money?"

The waiter nodded and hurried off.

Nian Bing said quietly, “Mighty Salamandhys, you should be as polite as you can be when you’re eating.” He understood Salamandhys’ eating habits from experience. Before, they had been to a restaurant in a small town. Salamandhys’ wild eating habits had scared a few people.

“Polite? Say it again once I’ve eaten first.” Salamandhys wouldn’t take Nian Bing’s advice.

Nian Bing was at a loss. He really wanted to tell others that he didn’t know this gluttonous beast, but his life was more important. Endure, just endure it. He didn’t say anything else. He turned his attention away. Right at this time, guests at the table nearest to them were talking. Their voices were quite loud, so Nian Bing could hear them clearly.

“Did you hear? Duke Lan Yu returned from the frontlines.”

“Duke Lanyu has returned? They don’t need his strength anymore? If he’s not there to lead the troops, what will they do if Harmonic Flower and Qi Lu attack?”

When he caught this exchange, Nian Bing could not help the pique in his interest. Didn’t Luo Rou want him to send a letter to the Duke Lan Yu’s mansion?

“There’s no need for defense of course. I heard that that the Ice Moon Empire came to mediate, and the problem was resolved. Harmonic Flower and Qi Lu promised that they wouldn’t invade us for another three years. Of course, we paid no small price. Harmonic Flower and Qi Lu are a tiger and wolf. Who knows how much of our resources they pillaged this time.”

“Ai, I knew it would end up like this. If it’s not territory we have to give reparations. Profound Orchid is done for.”

“Shh, be quiet. It won’t be good if the officers hear you. Ai, now our Profound Orchid Empire is relying on Duke Lan Yu’s support. If for not his command of the Silver Feather Cavalry Troop in battle, perhaps we would have been beaten by the men of the Harmonic Flower and Qi Lu already. We won’t be able go on much longer. We should group towards the north, closer to the Ice Moon Empire. Ice Moon won’t just watch our Profound Orchid get destroyed. If Harmonic Flower get’s stronger, perhaps the climate of the whole continent will change.”

“You can’t say that. I think that the Ice Moon Empire harbour bad intentions. Otherwise, all they needed to do was ask the Ice and Snow Goddess’ Worshipper for help. Then how could the Harmonic Flower Empire dare to boast. Our Profound Orchid Empire has too few strong people, so we get pushed around all the time.

“Harmonic Flower and Qi Lu are already so big, but they still haven’t stopped expanding. They really are avaricious wolves! Actually, if Duke Lan Yu were to be in charge of our Profound Orchid Empire, perhaps the current situation could change? It’s

such a pity that Duke Lan Yu is too loyal to the royal family, so nothing will ever happen.”

“Stop talking about this. The affairs of the government has nothing to do with ordinary people like us. Drink, drink.”

The conversation stopped there as the guests continued eating and drinking. From their words, it was not hard to understand what sort of position Duke Lan Yu held in the Profound Orchid Empire. Nian Bing thought, Luo Rou, oh Luo Rou. You were counting on Duke Lan Yu’s daughter to help you, but the Profound Orchid Empire has no time for your affairs. Never mind. No matter what, he would certainly carry out what he promised: he would deliver this letter.

However, he caught onto another detail. This Duke Lan Yu was the commander-in-chief of the entire Silver Feather Cavalry. Hadn’t Aunt Yu Ru Yan been under their protection? Maybe this Duke Lan Yu knows Auntie Yu Ru Yan. If he could meet her through this that would be good. So many years had passed, he didn’t know how she was doing.

When he thought of her kind smile, he couldn’t help but feel a warmth swell in his heart. He stood up and walked over to the table next to him. To the person wearing a white, long robe, he asked, “Big Brother, could I trouble you with something?”

The man in white was drinking. When he heard Nian Bing’s voice, he subconsciously lifted his head. Nian Bing’s handsome mien was easily accepted by others. When coupled with his sincere and polite tone, the man in white responded favorably. “Little

Brother, what do you want to ask? I can tell from your accent that you're not from around here."

Nian Bing nodded and answered, "I am from the Ice Moon Empire. I must ask you, how do I get to Duke Lan Yu's mansion?"

The man in white was obviously surprised. He sized up Nian Bing. "You're looking for Duke Lan Yu? Little Brother, I see you want to enlist. You should go to the military department. Duke Lan Yu isn't someone who can be seen whenever you want."

Nian Bing adopted a reverent expression. "Duke Lan Yu has always been my idol, my most respected person. I just want to know where his mansion is. Maybe I can wait outside there so I can catch a glimpse of him."

Hearing Nian Bing's praise, the white clothed man's faced morphed to one much more pleasant. He nodded his head in approval. "Not bad, Duke Lan Yu is said to be the guardian deity of our Profound Orchid Empire! Without him, Profound Orchid would not be able to look the way it does now. There are many youths like you, but you'll need luck to see Duke Lan Yu. The duke's mansion is in the south of the city. The only thing bigger than the duke's residence is the imperial palace. If you ask around in that general area, you're sure to find it."

Nian Bing smiled. "Thank you for the tip." He returned to his seat.

"Nian Bing, you brat, you didn't bring me to Profound Orchid

City so that I could eat delicious food,” Salamandhys said dissatisfied.

Nian Bing grinned. “Of course I did. Why wouldn’t I? I just happen to have some personal matters. A friend entrusted me with a letter. Don’t worry, it won’t take too much time.”

“Delivering a letter! That is permissible, but don’t you forget, your body carries my magic brand. It’s impossible for you to run.” Salamandhys’ eyes suddenly turned red, and gave Nian Bing a heavy look. They seemed to say, Boy, I will definitely eat you later.

Nian Bing helplessly shook his head. Lowering his voice, he replied, “Being together with the mighty Salamandhys is my honor. Why would I want to run? Don’t worry. After we finish eating we will first find a place to stay, then in the afternoon I will deliver the letter. If you feel that it’s no good here, tomorrow we can go to the Harmonic Flower Empire. It’s the strongest empire in all of Yangguang, and also the most prosperous. Naturally, they have many delicious foods there.”

Two hours later. Nian Bing wore a long fance as he and Salamandhys exited the restaurant.

“Peh, peh peh! What sort of dog shit restaurant is this. They made such disgusting food, Nian Bing! Your skills are way better than theirs.” Salamandhys was extremely dissatisfied with the restaurant’s food.

“Boss, don’t curse them. Despite everything, you ate so much

anyway, and you ate their most expensive dishes. We only have two gold coins left; I think it'll be enough to stay the night. It seems I really might have to find work to support your lifestyle."

Salamandhys acted as if that was at it should be. "Even if it tasted bad, I still managed to eat my fill. If you want to find work then do so. As long as I can eat good food, it doesn't matter to me where we stay."

When he heard this, Nian Bing was pleased instead of angry. Lowering his head, a glimmer flashed through his eyes that Salamandhys didn't say. The words "to use" fluttered through Nian Bing's head.

Salamandhys had high demands for what he wanted to eat, but he wasn't particular about where he would live. As long as he had a bed he could sleep. Sleeping after a full meal was his favorite thing to do. The two found the cheapest inn and settled in. Salamandhys went to sleep, and Nian Bing used one gold coin at a magic store to buy ten of the cheapest blank scrolls.

Selling scrolls was perhaps the fastest way to make money. With a stomach like Salamandhys', not many people could sustain it.

His Ice and Fire Source had advanced, making Nian Bing much more adept at magic arrays. Turning blank scrolls into magic scrolls had a low success rate, but if he made ordinary rank 4 scrolls with the trigger effect, it wasn't hard. Profound Orchid City was really very poor, if he sold a couple he would have enough money.

Making the scrolls only took Nian Bing two hours. Except for one that failed due to carelessness, he managed to make nine rank 4 magic scrolls. Salamandhys' snored quite loudly. Nian Bing gave him a look, then quietly left to the room. As he heard from others, he headed to the southern part of the city.

He was in no hurry to sell the scrolls; he would do it after delivering the letter. Just like the white-clothed man had said in the inn, it wasn't hard to find Duke Lan Yu's mansion. After Nian Bing arrived in the south, all he had to do was ask one person to find his target destination. Even two streets away, he could already see the seven meter high courtyard walls. The mansion was huge. The vermilion courtyard walls resembled city walls.

At the main entrance, sixteen Silver Feather cavalrymen clad in light silver armor were standing in two lines. On their helmets were green feathers. Each had their hands on the swords that hung on their wait. Although they seemed to be intensely single-minded. Nian Bing could clearly sense that they were observing everything in their surroundings. In case a blade of grass so much as shifted in the wind, these cavalrymen would execute the fastest reaction.

These sixteen low-level Silver Feather Cavalrymen were actually all swordmaster level warriors! Who could say that the Profound Orchid Empire was weak. Harmonic Flower's Flame Lion Cavalry might be the only ones comparable to the ten thousand man Silver Feather Cavalry. No wonder the citizens called Duke Lan Yu the guardian deity of Profound Orchid. The Silver Feather Cavalry definitely could face off against two hundred thousand army of ordinary people.

Inside the duke's mansion.

A handsome man in his forties was seated behind a table in the studies, his brows furrowed. He seemed to be thinking about something that weighed on his heart. Although this man was sitting, he was inadvertently exuding an intense pressure. Emotions flitted through his eyes. His long, black robe couldn't cover imposing figure. His hands, resting on the table were exceptionally striking. His palms were broad while his fingers slender. Although his joints didn't protrude, it was obvious that these were an extremely powerful pair of hands.

The door opened and someone walked in. A pleasant and gentle voice spoke. "You've returned. What did His Majesty say today?"

The middle-aged man lifted his head. A woman who looked to be twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old entered. She was wearing a pale blue dress which was stitched with beautiful flower patterns. Elegant eyebrows, a fine nose, supple skin. A head of dark green, silky hair, spilled behind her, bound by a silver ring. Her blue eyes were clear and penetrating. A mixture of concern and worry showed on her face. If Nian Bing saw her, he would immediately recognize her. She was Ru Yu Yan who had given him the Heavenly Flower Tile. She had not changed at all in these eight years.

Chapter 72.1 - A Reunion With Yu Ru Yan

“Ru Yan, come here.” The middle-aged man looked at Yu Ru Yan, his tightly knit eyebrows immediately relaxing. A gentle smile appeared on his face, and a deeply tender expression could be seen. He reached out to embrace his beloved wife and settled her on his lap. He lost his tension as he inhaled the wonderful and familiar fragrance.

“What is it? From the way you look, it seems something is not going so smoothly! Could it be that His Majesty did not approve your military expenditure request?” Slight concern appeared in Yu Ru Yan’s eyes.

The middle-aged man shook his head. “How could that be? His Majesty has never not listened to my suggestions in the matters of military. But so what if he approves it? Right now the entire southern portion of the empire is famished. In the near future, something disastrous will happen. It is the people’s wealth that is the country’s wealth. Just having me is not enough. In the entire empire, there isn’t even one person that can help His Majesty with governing the land. You should know that all of those obsequious people just flatter and sweet-talk. At this rate, this country will no longer be a country!”

Yu Ru Yan sighed. “Let it go, Lan Yu. Even if you worry about it, there is no point. The corrupt empire is not something that can be changed in one or two days. You should look after yourself; don’t work too hard.”

Lan Yu took a deep breath. “I also want to rest, but how can I?

After this battle, three thousand soldiers of the Silver Feather Cavalry will not see their loved ones again. There aren't more than ten thousand people in the entire cavalry. If Harmonic Flower dispatches their Flame Lion Troop, I might not be able to stop them. Ice Moon is on good terms with us, but they won't sincerely help us. In time, if our country doesn't change, I'm afraid..."

Yu Ru Yan hugged her husband's neck. "Okay, don't say anymore. Be happier. Oh, that's right. It hasn't been all bad news recently. There are already five thousand people in the Silver Feather Cavalry reserve troops that I am in charge of. We can add an extra two thousand people to the battlefield. Although their experience can't compare to the countless steel and blood trials your warriors underwent, I believe that with some training, they can recover the loss this time. Actually, there are quite a few people of skill in the empire still. Just the other day, a young man and his sister came. This young man was a martial master. I think that they can directly join the cavalry."

Lan Yu smiled. "With you managing things, my heart is at ease. Never mind; speak no more of this. I only came back for a few days, and I haven't had time to accompany you."

Yu Ru Yan was about to say something when a respectful voice came from outside. "Here to report."

Yu Ru Yan wrinkled her brow. "What is it?"

"Reporting to Madam, there is a young man outside the mansion that says he is looking for the miss."

Yu Ru Yan and Lan Yu couldn't help but look at each other in alarm. Yu Ru Yan said, "Looking for Chen Chen? What does that young man look like?"

"He is a very handsome person. He has the miss' token, and he claimed he came to give her a letter."

Yu Ru Yan stood up from Lan Yu's lap. "Bring him in here to meet the Lord Duke and me."

"At once."

Nian Bing was standing in the entrance of the duke's mansion. The sixteen Silver Feather Cavalrymen, thirty-two eyes, were fixed on him, and it made him feel uncomfortable. He had already taken out the bead that Luo Rou had given him, but the cavalrymen would not let him go in. Rather, they went into the mansion to report.

The massive vermillion gates opened. A servant wearing green clothes came out and gave Nian Bing a look. "Please come with me."

Nian Bing let out a breath. As long as he could go in and deliver the letter, his task was complete. Under the watchful gaze of the cavalrymen, he followed the servant into the Duke's mansion.

Once he passed through the large gates, the first thing he saw was

the expansive training ground. Indeed, it was a drilling ground. It occupied about two thousand square meters and there were tens of people there sparring. The drilling ground was decorated with racks of weapons, qi was flying on the field; from their concentrated qi he could tell that they were at least great sword masters in strength. No doubt that this is the number one army in the Proud Orchid Empire! Although their attacks were simple, every movement was filled with an imposing might. Their techniques were most suited for battles.

The duke's mansion was very large, the many turns was like passing through a maze. The servant's expression was calm, not saying anything to Nian Bing. After entering the third courtyard, the servant brought Nian Bing in front of a door and stopped. To Nian Bing he said, "Please wait a moment." He then turned back to the door and said, "Reporting to Lord Duke, I have brought him."

A low and honest voice spoke, "Let him in."

"Yes," responded the servant. He moved to the side and opened the door, then gestured at Nian Bing.

Nian Bing was not polite and pushed his way in. He hadn't took one step into the room when he saw Yu Ru Yan next to the desk.

His blood started to boil and Nian Bing's calm eyes immediately welled up with emotion. He then took several steps over towards Yu Ru Yan, his body trembling.

When she saw Nian Bing walking over to her, Yu Ru Yan couldn't

help but feel some alarm. Coldness flashed in her gaze. She immediately said, "Halt." It had been close to eight years, and she had not changed at all, but Nian Bing had become much older. Eight years ago, he was still just a child. Eight years later, he had become a good-looking young man. On top of the changes to his stature, eight years had passed. How would she recognize him.

"Aunt, don't you recognize me?" Nian Bing put one knee to the ground, respectfully greeting Yu Ru Yuan. His voice was trembling, and tears began to drip off his face. He had never thought that when he came to the duke's mansion, he would see his beloved Aunt.

Yu Ru Yan and Lan Yu exchanged glances, then she looked back at Nian Bing. His fair face did give her a familiar feeling. She hesitantly asked, "You are?"

"Mother, I once called you mother!" While saying this, he pulled back his lapel, exposing the Heavenly Flower Tile.

A shock ran through Yu Ru Yan's body. Surprise bloomed across her face and she took a step forward to pull Nian Bing up. Now Nian Bing was over half a head taller than her. She scrutinized the handsome youth and said in surprise, "You are that little fatty from many years ago in the Ice Moon Empire? You, you are..."

"I am Nian Bing! Aunt, you haven't changed at all; you're still so beautiful." Nian Bing held Yu Ru Yan's hand, his voice filled with emotion.

Except for her own husband, another man touching her could have only one outcome: death. But at this moment, with her hand in Nian Bing's grip, she could only feel affection. There was no feeling of inappropriateness. Nian Bing's eyes held the feeling of a newborn; that deeply affected her.

A light cough interrupted them. If Duke Lan Yu was said to have some flaw, it would be jealousy. After all, he had such a beautiful wife. Who wouldn't prevent any men getting close to their wife. Although this young, handsome man wasn't quite in his wife's age category, Duke Lan Yu was still jealous. "Ru Yan, aren't you going to introduce me?"

Nian Bing finally looked to the other person sitting on the side. When Duke Lan Yu stood, he was almost the same height as Nian Bing. From his imposing style, Nian Bing immediately curbed the emotion in his eyes. "You must be Lord Duke Lan Yu. Hello, I am Nian Bing."

Yu Ru Yan held Nian Bing's hand. "Lan Yu, do you remember seven years ago, after I brought Chenchen to see her teacher, I gave the Heavenly Flower Tile to someone on the road? That was Nian Bing! I really did not think that over seven years later, Nian Bing would come back to find us. At that time, he called me Mother. I didn't think that he would grow up to be such a nice-looking fellow."

Lan Yu said suddenly, "He is that little fatty you spoke of? Nian Bing, since you came to find Ru Yan, why do you have Chen Chen's token?"

Nian Bing wiped away his tears. “I didn’t know that Auntie was here! A friend entrusted me with a letter for your daughter. You and Auntie Yu are...”

Yu Ru Yan smiled. “Silly boy, he is my husband! The duke’s daughter you want to see is our daughter! Haven’t you seen Chen Chen before back then?”

Nian Bing finally understood. His heart filled with praise of Duke Lan Yu. “So it was like that! Aunt, where is Miss Chenchen? A friend gave me this letter for her.” His space ring sparkled faintly, and the letter Luo Rou had given him appeared.

Yu Ru Yan took the letter and said, shocked, “Nian Bing, you are a mage?”

Nian Bing smiled and nodded. “Yes!”

Yu Ru Yan did not open the letter. “That is great! Our Proud Orchid Empire currently lacks mages. Was that old man from before your teacher? But I didn’t sense any magic power coming from him! Chen Chen is not here; she went to study with her teacher. She hasn’t come back in a year. When she comes back I’ll give it to her.”

Nian Bing said, “That man wasn’t my magic teacher. Aunt, this letter is extremely urgent. It involves my friend’s marriage. The earlier it’s decided the better.”

Yu Ru Yan frowned. “But this is Chen Chen’s letter. I can’t open it. Who sent the letter?”

Nian Bing said, “The financial minister of Ice Snow City’s daughter, Wise Girl, Luo Rou.”

Yu Ru Yan had a flash of understanding. “It’s that girl! I haven’t seen her in so many years. Chen Chen knew Luo Rou the year we met. When we were passing through Ice Snow City, we were received Ice Snow City’s hospitality. Chen Chen and Rou Rou became fast friends, almost sisters and exchanged tokens. What’s happening to Rou Rou, do you know?”

Nian Bing nodded. “I heard Luo Rou said, that she...” He relayed everything that Luo Rou had told him.

After hearing Nian Bing’s explanation, Yu Ru Yan smiled. “Since it’s like that, I understand Rou Rou’s intentions.”

Duke Lan Yu said, “Right now, our Profound Orchid Empire is in a bad state. Your aunt and me are extremely busy. This Miss Luo Rou is to be married to the Ice moon Empire’s royal family, so there’s not much we can do! Our power has limits after all.” He spoke the truth as he already had his hands full with the business of his own empire. How could he have time to care about personal matters?

Nian Bing had long since anticipated Duke Lan Yu’s answer, but he didn’t care. After all, he was just the messenger. Although he had a good impression of Luo Rou, she was just an ordinary friend.

Furthermore he believed that with Luo Rou's intelligence, even if she didn't have Duke Lan Yu's help, she wouldn't give up too easily.

At this moment, Yu Ru Yan suddenly smiled. She looked at Lan Yu said, "This letter came at a very good time. The problem you just spoke of can be decided by this letter."

Lan Yu's heart jump. He was an expert in battle. In terms of military, there weren't many people who could compare with him in the entire continent. But in terms of wisdom, he admired his wife. "Ru Yan, what do you mean?"

Yu Ru Yan smiled. "Brother Yu, did you forget what I told you about Miss Luo Rou before? When she and our daughter met, she was already famous in Ice Snow City, called wise. Her father's present position is to some extent because of her achievements. That girl is far smarter than me, particularly in management. Her father is much worse, but has a pretty good understanding of economics."

Having been with his wife so long, Lan Yu immediately understood. "If we secretly bring them to our Proud Orchid, and change their loyalties to us..."

Chapter 72.2 - A Reunion With Ru Yu Yan

Yu Ru Yan smiled. “It’s good that you understand. What you have to do is recommend Rou’er to His Majesty. I haven’t been to Ice Moon Empire much in the past few years, but I am very familiar with Rou’er’s situation. I can guarantee, that if she is here to help manage His Majesty’s affairs, in some time, the empire’s situation will change completely. Who says that women are lesser than men?”

“If we have talent like Rou’er, we can’t let her go. This is a good chance. Actually, perhaps Rou Rou gave Nian Bing this letter for this reason. That girl is very bright. Since she didn’t want to marry the Ice Moon prince, naturally, she would need to find a route of retreat. They are not a prosperous family, consisting only of father and daughter. So it shouldn’t be too hard to decide. I will go there personally. Nian Bing, relax. Auntie will deal with this.”

Nian Bing did not understand government business, but he was smart. From Yu Ru Yan and her husband’s discourse, he grasped the main idea. He could not help but secretly praise Auntie Yu Ru Yan’s foresight. Luo Rou’s wise girl moniker was not so easily garnered. If she were a man, she might have been much more important to the Ice Moon Empire. If Duke Lan Yu brought her to the Proud Orchid Empire, changing the current state of the Proud Orchid Empire might not be impossible as long as she was not judged for her gender. After all, the most important thing to the empire was talent.

“Auntie, then I must ask this of you,” Nian Bing responded respectfully.

Yu Ru Yan shook out her long, dark green hair. “Nian Bing, you have come from far away to deliver your friend’s letter. You should rest here. Oh, that’s right, you haven’t told me, who is your magic teacher?”

Nian Bing said, “My teacher is the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association’s Magister Long Zhi.”

Duke Lan Yu said, “So it was Long Zhi! I know of him. He is extremely adept at magic. It’s just a pity the Ice God’s Pagoda is in Ice Moon; they don’t put too much importance on the Mage Association. Since you are his disciple, your magic must be strong. Nian Bing, do you have any family in Ice Moon Empire?”

Nian Bing’s heart shook. He shook his head. “I don’t have any family anymore.”

Duke Lan Yu smiled. “Since you no longer have any ties there, and you have a past with Ru Yan, you should stay in Proud Orchid City. Our Mage Association needs people. I recently had a chat with the empire’s mage association to see if we can form a team of mages, like the Flame Lion Cavalry.”

Nian Bing replied, “Lord Duke, I’m afraid that it won’t be that easy. From what I know, the mages of the Flame Lion Cavalry all specialize in fire magic. Moreover, for mages to join a cavalry, they need to train in order to cooperate perfectly. Otherwise, it would be easy to accidentally injure others. I respect Auntie Yu very much, but I still have many things to do, so I cannot stay.”

Duke Lan Yu was not to put upon by Nian Bing's refusal. "Then don't worry about it. But, from now on you will encounter hardships in your journey outside. If you feel that the Ice Moon Empire Mage Association can't hold you anymore, then I welcome you to join Proud Orchid City anytime. You have come from afar. Stay several days, and let us do the honor of being your host."

Nian Bing shook his head. I still have a friend waiting on me. I might not be able to stay long here in Proud Orchid. Lord Duke, Aunt Yu, I have a request that I hope you can grant."

Yu Ru Yan smiled softly. "Feel free to say it. Auntie will do her best to accommodate you."

Emotion welled up in Nian Bing's eyes. He gazed deeply into Yu Ru Yan's eyes. "Auntie, I have always regarded you as a mother in my heart. Even if that was the first time we met, you gave me, a total stranger, the precious Heavenly Flower Tile. During my magic cultivation, the Heavenly Flower Tile's warmth pulled me back from a crisis. You could say that you are my benefactor who saved my life. I hope that you can give me the chance to repay you.

"One day. Please, give me one day to prepare. After one day, I hope to make a meal for you, how bout dat?"

Duke Lan Yu and Yu Ru Yan went blank. She thought she had misheard. "Make a meal? Nian Bing, Auntie doesn't understand what you mean."

Nian Bing smiled confidently. “Auntie, tomorrow you will understand. I will come back tomorrow. Can I enter by showing the Heavenly Flower Tile?”

Yu Ru Yan nodded. “Of course you can. But aren’t you a mage? How can you be a chef?”

Nian Bing smiled. “Auntie, I was always a chef! Didn’t you remember the elderly man I was with when we first met? He is my culinary teacher. For me, cooking and magic are equally important. Lord Duke, Auntie Yu, I will now take my leave.” He paid the two his respects before showing himself out.

As he looked at Nian Bing’s retreating figure, Duke Lan Yu frowned slightly. “Ru Yan, what do you think of that young man? You are sure he is that child from then?”

Yu Ru Yan nodded. “I can’t be wrong. Not only does he have the Heavenly Flower Tile, he also spoke of things that happened when we met. The biggest thing was that the emotion in his eyes was similar to the emotion in that child’s eyes. It hasn’t changed at all, but now that child is all grown up. He is much wiser than he was before. Big Brother Yu, I feel that he is not ordinary at all. In the future, he will have many accomplishments. I just don’t understand, why would he want to become a chef?”

Lan Yu smiled. “Ru Yan, do not look down on any profession, even one like a chef. We just need to wait and see what kind of surprise he has in store for us. Based on his confidence, it is obvious he has great faith in his cooking skills. If he really is such a talent, I hope that you can use his feelings for you to make him

stay. Right now, the thing our empire lacks most is talent!”

A crease appeared in between her brows. “Big Brother Yu, how could you make me take advantage of such pure feelings? Of course it would be good if he wanted to stay, but we can’t force him to against his will, okay?”

He broke out into laughter. “That’s my bad, I spoke too much. We will do as you say. But I can tell that he isn’t so simple. Especially his eyes: they were filled with intelligence!”

After leaving the duke’s mansion, Nian Bing did not return the hotel. Instead, he went to a nearby magic item store and sold all nine of his magic scrolls. If he hadn’t met Yu Ru Yan, he might only have sold three or four, but it was different now. He always hoped that he could make some of his dishes for her to try. Thus, he needed more funds to buy all sorts of valuable ingredients.

Out of the nine magic scrolls, Nian Bing had to set off one at the scene. The remaining eight were sold for 250 gold coins each. After all, a protective magic scroll that didn’t need manual activation was desired by all, particularly nobles. So despite the fact they were only rank 4 scrolls, they were sold for a high price.

After leaving the magic item shop, he asked around for the busiest area in Proud Orchid City. Nian Bing used the bulk of the two hundred purple-gold coins he got from selling the scrolls to buy all sorts of ingredients, as well as seasonings and medicinal cooking ingredients. This was why he needed a day to prepare.

The most important part of the cooking process was the seasoning. Seasoning could not only make delicious dishes taste even better, but they could also bring out the innate flavor of the ingredients if used properly. The best seasoning required many kinds of flavors mixed together. Since the secret amalgamation that Zha Ji taught him had to be kept a secret, Nian Bing had to do the mixing himself.

Once he returned to the hotel, Nian Bing carefully pushed open the door to the room. Salamandhys was still going strong with the snoring. Not only were dragons the strongest creatures on the continent, but they were also the best at sleeping. Sighing, Nian Bing secretly prayed that Salamandhys would sleep until after he made Auntie Yu Ru Yan's meal.

He took out sacks of seasoning from his space ring, then also took out the bottles he had bought one by one. He first made sure they were well-marked, then started to adeptly mix ingredients together. For Nian Bing, there were two things he could wholly devote himself to. One was magic cultivation. The other was culinary arts.

Making food for Salamandhys could be said to be a kind of torture. He derived no happiness from it. In those sorts of circumstances, thought\ Nian Bing still could cook delicious food, the quality was a lot worse than he would have wanted it. Since he had left the Peach Blossom Forest, Nian Bing had never made something like the perfect dish he wanted to make now.

So focused on mixing his seasonings, he didn't notice that behind him, Salamandhys cracked an eye open to watch him (still

snoring). Saliva dripped out of the corner of a grotesque smile.

Nian Bing took two hours to mix the seasonings to his satisfaction. He took a second to look at the close to thirty bottles of seasoning that he used, then put them all back into his space ring. He then firmly grasped the positions of the bottles he wanted inside the space ring, as well as the markings on them. He then nodded in satisfaction.

He then filled a basin with clean water. He bought a clean towel from the hotel, and then took out his four divine knives and carefully wiped them clean. Tomorrow, he did not want there to be a single flaw in the meal he would make a meal for Yu Ru Yan. After all of this, he sat cross-legged on the bed. The last thing he did was rub the toasty Heavenly Flower Tile before entering meditation.

After evolving, the magic elements that the Ice and Fire Source absorbed did not need careful management. Just by relying on the harmonization of ice and fire, he could absorb the two types of magic element much faster than ever before. He sent his spiritual force outwards; very soon, Nian Bing, who emptied his mind, sank into a much deeper meditative state. Bit by bit, particle by particle, his magic was advancing.

He meditated from the afternoon to the morning of the next day. The minute the rays of the sun filtered into the room, his eyes opened. Unbeknownst to him, one of Nian Bing's bright blue eyes had turned a scorching red, while the other had turned as clear and deep blue as the sky. With just a thought, he mobilized the magic in through his body. The vigor of magic was very soothing.

After a good stretch, he turned to look at Salamandhys. Salamandhys still sound asleep. Everything was going just as well as he imagined.

He lightly got off the bed. Despite the crudeness of the inn, it still had a washroom. Nian Bing took a bath, dispelling the last of his jitters. He then took out the clothes Xue Jing had given him back then from his space ring.

The white long robe had a dragon embroidered it with silver thread. It wasn't that heavily decorated, but it added the finishing touches to the ensemble. It was sumptuous without losing to elegance. The set came with a simple white belt with a milky-white stone at the center. Caressing the white clothes, he could not help of think of when he chased away Xue Jing. Jing'er, are you do welling now? I hope that you won't blame me. I had no other option. You have a bad temper, but it doesn't change that you are a nice girl. I hope that you can find your other half and live happily.

The silver dragon clothes that he changed into, complimented his aristocratic features well. The white clothes outlined his slender form while setting off his golden hair. His sea blue eyes held a unfathomable depth. Breathing in deeply, Nian Bing set off at a fast pace away from the inn.

Just as Nian Bing exited the inn, Salamandhys who was lying in the room suddenly sat up. "Boy, you actually want to go make good food for someone else without calling me. Hmmph, I will also have my fill. Nian Bing, oh Nian Bing. Did you think that my brand was only to sense your position? Hehe..."

As he walked on the main road, Nian Bing felt more and more uncomfortable because of all the scrutiny he was getting from the people passing by. The gazes of the young girls made him feel particularly apprehensive. Was the Profound Orchid Empire so open-minded? It seemed it would be better if he had wore simple clothes! Now that he was in this situation, there was nothing he could do. He simply sped up until he reached the duke's mansion.

After showing his Heavenly Flower Tile, the Silver Feather Cavalrymen quickly let him in through the entrance. He followed a servant back to Duke Lan Yu's study. On a normal day, when Duke Lan Yu was not at court, he would be in study managing his affairs.

At the entrance of the study, he heard people talking.

"Lord Duke, this is the news our sisters retrieved after nearly half a year. Do you have any instructions?"

Duke Lan Yu said, "En, I have caused you much trouble. You don't have to go back there. I have something else I need you to do, so rest in the mansion first."

After this brief exchange, the servant who had led Nian Bing in announced loudly, "Lord Duke, Sir Nian Bing has arrived."

"Oh, let him in."

When he heard the voice speaking before, Nian Bing realized that

the girl's voice was very familiar. He must have heard it somewhere before, but it wasn't Yu Ru Yan's voice. The servant motioned him in with these doubts in Nian Bing's heart. He pushed open the door only to see Duke Lan Yu sitting behind his desk like was yesterday, Yu Ru yan standing next to him and smiling, and two girls standing solemnly in front of the desk. When they heard him enter, the two girls subconsciously turned around.

Nian Bing's jaw dropped in shock. "Ah! Why are you here?"

The surprise was mirrored. "Why are you here?"

Chapter 73.1 - Lan Xun, Ru Yi's Lover

Who could these two girls, in Duke Lan Yu's study, be to make Nian Bing so surprised? It was Ru Yi and Ru Meng, the sisters that he had encountered in the whorehouse several months ago, in Ice Orchid City. His mind went blank for a moment, then he immediately knew their identities.

Though he knew that they were assigned by some other country to spy on the Ice Moon Empire and the Profound Orchid Empire, it was very obvious where their loyalties lay now, as they stood in the office military head of the Profound Orchid Empire, Duke Lan Yu. When Ru meng had spoke to him about a benefactor it probably was Duke Lan Yu, and the benefactor's daughter should be the absent Lan Chen.

Lan Yu looked at Nian Bing with renewed surprise. "You know each other?"

Ru Yi snorted coldly. "Lord Duke, the strange young man I spoke about earlier is him. We have suffered setbacks from the magic reaper because of him. Don't let him leave so that the magic reaper will come." She then placed her hand onto her sword.

"Big Sister, he is not a bad person." Ru Meng rushed forward to stay her hand. When they had been reporting to the duke, only Ru Yi had been talking, nevertheless she had wanted to interject several times, but she never got an opportunity.

Ru Yi shouted angrily, "How could a good person come to a place

like a whorehouse. Get out of my way. If you hadn't let him go, then I wouldn't have been humiliated by the magic reaper."

Lan Yu ordered, "Ru Yi stop. Do not be impudent."

If another person had spoken, Ru Yi would not have heeded them, but as she had complete and utter respect for Lan Yu, she hurriedly put away her sword and withdrew. "Sorry, Lord Duke."

Lan Yu turned to Nian Bing, his brows wrinkling slightly. "Boy, as a man you can pursue affairs of the heart, but you cannot be crass about it. Don't go to those low-class places anymore... Now, I want to know how this magic reaper is related to you."

Nian Bing said coolly, "What you want to know is not what my relationship is with him, but the history of the Ice and Fire Source. If another person asked, I definitely would not say a word, but since you are Auntie Yu's husband, I won't hide anything. The truth is that I am the magic reaper, and the magic reaper is me. Back then, I disguised myself to punish Miss Ru Yi because she was indiscriminately killing. To be honest, if it weren't for Miss Ru Meng interceding on her behalf, she might have already died by my hand."

A light twinkled deep in Lan Yu's eyes. "So you are the magic reaper, then I hope you can explain." Shock could be seen in Ru Yi's and Ru Meng's eyes.

Nian Bing stuck out his chest and said coldly, "I don't have any explanation for this, nor do I need to explain anything for that

matter. Miss Ru Yi is your subordinate; you should believe what she says.” At this moment, he felt like a needle was piercing his heart because his most revered person, Aunt Yu Ru Yan, was giving him a cold and harsh look from where she stood by the desk. Indeed, Auntie Yu had such a high position in his heart, but the grim truth was that they had only seen each other twice in so many years. What basis did he have for her to believe him?

Yu Ru Yan walked forward from around the desk. “Nian Bing, you can leave. From now on, I don’t want to see you anymore. You attacked Ru Yi and her sister. I can excuse you on behalf of the passion of youth, but I won’t show mercy next time.”

Nian Bing smiled, and the intense sorrow in his eyes made Yu Ru Yan’s heart tremble. Nian Bing’s own heart was very, very cold. Since he had left the Peach Blossom Forest, he had remained alert at all times, keeping his distance from everyone. Even Feng Nu was not excepted. But when he saw Yu Ru Yan yesterday, the gates around his heart came crashing down.

The loss of his parents was his greatest sorrow. In his mind, Yu Ru Yan was gentle and kind just like his mother. Though he knew that it was normal for Yu Ru Yan and Lan Yu to doubt him, he couldn’t help but feel intense pain.

He then inhaled deeply, forcibly vanishing his emotions. He did not even spare Ru Yi a glance and said emotionlessly, “Auntie, no matter how you view me, in my heart, you are a revered person. I will leave and won’t come back. But I hope you can give me the chance to make you a meal; then I will leave immediately.” He took off the Heavenly Flower Tile, which had not left his person in over

seven years. Afterward, he walked over to the table, gazing deeply at the red gem in the jade tile one last time. He then sighed, and put it on the table.

Yu Ru Yan asked coldly, “You really have no explanation?”

Nian Bing shook his head. “I am an outsider to you and Lord Duke. Meeting you at that time was a kind of fate, but it seems that all of our fate has been used up now.”

A cold light flashed in her eyes.”Nian Bing, from my experience, I have come to hate fickle men the most, especially men who make women suffer for their own pleasures. I have watched Ru Yi grow up. I know her personality is intense, but she definitely wouldn’t lie. So I choose to believe her. You have a very good appearance but if you use it to bully women, then you are innately flawed. Get out. Now I have no heart to eat anything, especially anything you want me to eat.”

“Auntie, can’t you give me a chance to repay you?” Nian Bing suddenly felt his breathing grow labored, and his vision fuzzy.

Yu Ru Yan was about to say something, but Duke Lan Yu spoke first. “Ru Yan, let him do it. I think that this child is not that kind of person. Perhaps it was a just a mistake on his part.”

Yu Ru Yan first looked at her husband, then looked at Nian Bing. The coldness in her eyes changed slightly and she snorted lightly, but did not say anything.

Nian Bing was calm as he bowed to the duke. “Many thanks, Lord Duke, for giving me this opportunity. Could I trouble you to put a stove on the training ground? It would be hard to showcase this in a kitchen. I would also need a large table to put the food on. I have already prepared everything else.”

Lan Yu nodded. “Okay. Ru Yi, you go and instruct the servants to do as Nian Bing says. The rest of us will go to the training ground.”

Ru Yi agreed and left the study, but not before shooting Nian Bing an icy glare. Nian Bing simply followed after her and didn’t say anything. Now that his heart had calmed down, he had nothing he wanted to say. Moreover, Ru Yi had always been a pitiable person.

Seeing Nian Bing leave, Ru Meng said impatiently, “Lord Duke, Madam, you are wrong. The truth is that Nian Bing is not that kind of person.”

While they were both stunned at this statement, Yu Ru Yan frowned and asked. “What you mean to say is that Ru Yi was lying to us?”

Ru Meng stiffened. “No, actually, Big Sister... Big Sister is just being a little extreme.” Then she relayed what happened on that day from her point of view.

After listening to Ru Meng, Lan Yu furrowed his brow. “No way! To my knowledge, although Ru Yi has a strong personality, she was someone who could see the big picture. Otherwise I would not

have let her be in charge of the northern intelligence system. I really cannot believe that her personality would have had such a big change. Ru Meng, is there something that you're hiding from me? What happened to Ru Yi?" Wise as he was, he could already see some gaps in her story. A person's personality doesn't change for no reason.

Ru Meng immediately knelt to the ground with an audible thud. "Lord Duke, Madam, I cannot say. This is related to Big Sister's reputation. Big Sister... Big Sister she is already so pitiful. Please don't investigate this, please."

A shudder ran through Yu Ru Yan, and a light flashed in her eyes. "I understand. So it was him. I know why Ru Yi suddenly asked for an outside assignment. Hmph, I won't let him off lightly."

Ru Meng was shocked but hurried to say, "Madam, you can't actually blame Big Brother Lan Xun. He has his own suffering in terms of feelings..." As she said this, she suddenly discovered that Yu Ru Yan's expression had changed. Then she understood, she had been duped. "Madam, I..."

A silver light encased Yu Ru Yan's whole form. "Lan Xun, so it was actually Lan Xun, that brat. You really have worked hard in hiding this from me. Ru Meng, tell me everything related to this. Did you know that your sister treated Nian Bing's life with utter disregard. If you don't say anything, I will have to punish her."

As Lan Yu's wife, Yu Ru Yan was not somebody that a young woman like Ru Meng could contend with. In just one sentence, she had delved into the truth. Now she finally understood Nian Bing's

expression from before, and her heart filled with remorse. But right now she needed to know what happened to Ru Yi.

Nian Bing arrived at the training field and walked over to a shaded area by himself. Today there wasn't anyone drilling, so the field was resoundly empty. Occasionally, one of the servants of the mansion would pass by. He suddenly thought of what Zha Ji had said to him when he was passing down his culinary skills.

Zha Ji had said that an ordinary chef had one aspect they really needed to watch out for when they were cooking. That was, to control their emotions. In order to bring out their full potential, they could not let their emotions affect the taste of their food.

However, when a chef's skills reached the peak, they had to take the complete opposite view on the matter of emotions. Instead of controlling them, he should express them fully and use the emotions to make better food. For a top rate chef, different emotions could change the food. Even if it was the same dish, they would taste completely different. Emotions were what high-ranked chefs needed to study the most.

Right now, he was full of sorrow. What kind of dish would he make? He didn't know, he really didn't. After breathing in deeply, he exhaled slowly. Anyway, after making this meal, a period would end. There would no longer be a connection between Yu Ru Yan and him.

"Excuse me, I haven't seen you here before," came a warm voice from behind him. Nian Bing shook. He had not discovered this person getting near him at all. He really was being too careless. He

turned around to see a young man standing behind him dressed in blue warrior's clothes and a long sword at his waist.

The man was handsome, nicely complemented by his heroic vibe. It was very easy for him to give others a good impression. He could sense a faintly discernable aura that he was at least a great swordmaster, or perhaps even a martial master.

“Hello, I just came to the duke's mansion,” Nian Bing responded politely.

When the blue clad warrior saw Nian Bing, he couldn't help but feel alarmed. He had always flaunted himself as someone with outstanding looks, but he was still much inferior to the golden haired, white robed, youth in front of him. “Brother is indeed a good-looking fellow. My name is Lan Xun, a guard in Lord Duke's service. What is your name? What did you come here for?”

Nian Bing smiled thinly. “My name is Nian Bing. I came here as a chef for the duke and his wife.”

“A chef?” His surprise spilled out of his eyes, and he sized Nian Bing up all over. A strange look came to his eyes. “You are a chef.”

Nian Bing grinned. “What of it, do I not look like one? In a moment, I can prove it to you.”

Just as he finished saying this, Ru Yi had arrived at the training grounds, leading some servants. She motioned for the servants to

set down the stove. As she inadvertently raised her head up, she saw Nian Bing and Lan Xun standing together. Frost immediately covered her pretty face and she cursed quietly, “Birds of a feather flock together.”

Nian Bing was standing not far from the center of the field, and after eating so much of the Iron Thread Snake Gall’s his auditory and visual acuity had improved by leaps and bounds. His heart jumped involuntarily when she heard what he said. He looked back at Lan Xun. Presently, a change had appeared on Lan Xun’s face. Complicated emotions were being expressed in his black eyes.

“Are you the man who failed Ru Yi?” Nian Bing’s voice had turned cold. The tenseness between him and Auntie Yu were because of what Ru Yi had said to the duke. And Ru Yi’s changes were because of this heartless man.

Lan Xun’s face changed. “What are you saying? I never failed Ru Yi. It was her who wanted to leave me. It seems you really know quite a bit.”

Nian Bing was shocked. “You didn’t betray her? But then why did I hear you ignored her for a beautiful girl?”

Pain appeared in Lan Xun’s eyes. “I don’t know what Ru Yi told you, but my feelings for her were genuine. Ai, Ru Yi, she is just too stubborn.”

Chapter 73.2 - Lan Xun, Ru Yi's Lover

Nian Bing then asked, “But then why did you fawn over another girl when you and Ru Yi were together?”

Lan Yu frowned. “‘Fawn over’? It seems that Ru Yi still doesn’t believe me. It’s true that I liked Miss Chen in the past... but during the lowest point in my life, Ru Yi was the one to enter my world. It was her painstaking and loving care that helped me recover from my despair. At that time, I truly thought of her as the woman who suited me the most; when we were together, I truly did love her.

“At the time, she clearly saw my status. Miss Chen and I didn’t just have different backgrounds... we were from different leagues. Her moral character, her looks... they were all far above mine. Thus, I had to let go of my feelings. As such, when Miss Chen returned got back from her master’s place, I already saw her as a little sister. Lord Duke has raised us orphans since we were young. And, as his guard, I’m concerned about the Miss’ daily life. What’s so wrong about me arranging things for her? That was part of my work previously as well.

“However, Ru Yi just doesn’t seem to understand. She thinks that I still have feelings for Miss Chen, that I’m still interested in her. No matter how many times I’ve explained it to her, it just goes in one ear and out the other. Every day she’d fight with me over this. However, as a man, I have many things I need to do. One day, I got so fed up with her whining that I ended up saying some hurtful things. The very next day, without even giving me a chance to apologize or redeem myself, she requested an outside assignment from Lord Duke. Ai, I was also too impulsive. Even though she’s a girl, she’s very stubborn. I’ve thought of many different ways to

get near her, but she's as immovable as an icy mountain."

Nian Bing stared wide-eyed at Lan Xun. He definitely couldn't let himself be so unlucky as to fall victim to such a misunderstanding. "Brother Lan, when you intentionally hurt Ru Yi, did you tell her that you didn't have any feelings for her, that she was just Miss Chen's replacement, and that you could only ever love Miss Chen?"

Lan Xun stared back at Nian Bing, his eyes just as large. "No way, even you know what I said to her! Tell me, what's your relationship with Ru Yi?"

Seeing the darkening expression on Lan Xun's face, Nian Bing hurried to answer, "There's no relationship between Miss Ru Yi and I. I only know what you said because Miss Ru Meng told me. However, Brother Lan, how could you say such a thing? Didn't you know realize much it would hurt a girl, how much it would hurt much less Miss Ru Yi?

Lan Xun sighed. "Do you really think I wanted to say that?! Ru Yi lost her parents when she was little. Because of this, she's always been too self-deprecating, and has always been extremely pessimistic. When we started fighting, every day she'd ask if I was only with her because we slept together...whether or not I still loved Miss Chin...if she was just her replacement... Just think about it! I already had a ton of work to do everyday, and now she was constantly nagging me with these questions. Do you really think that I could take it, every single day? I lost my mind out of anger that day! And when I did, I said what I knew would hurt her."

After hearing this, Nian Bing finally understood. Lan Xun wasn't a man who would terrorize a woman's heart for no reason. The real problem lay with Ru Yi. He pat Lan Xun on his shoulder and asked, "Do you still like Ru Yi?"

Lan Xun bitterly replied, "Do you really think I would've been willing to suffer this much if I didn't like her? 'A day together as husband and wife means endless devotion for a hundred days'. We were already a couple, and I do truly love her. Thus, how can I not worry about her?"

Nian Bing nodded. "Since you truly do love her, have faith. Remember: Hate can spring forth from deep love. Right now, Ru Yi still loathes, which confirms that she can't forget you. Since that is so, you'll have many chances to get her back. It will all depend on you; on whether or not you can grab onto them.

"From what I understand, she's been stubborn since she was young. As such, you'll need to patiently explain things to her in order to gradually change things between you. In my opinion, you two definitely didn't talk enough in the past, which was why there wasn't any trust between the two of you. You're a man, right? Seize this chance."

Lan Xun nodded. "I was also thinking that. It's a rare chance where Ru Yi has returned. As such, I should resolve the problem between us sooner rather than later. No matter what, this time I'll make it so that she'll stay. Brother, this is the first time we've met, but we are of kindred spirits. Thank you for your advice. Ai... now I just don't know when the best time to approach her would be.

Nian Bing smiled and shook his head. “There’s no need to be polite, Brother Lan. Actually, it’s not that hard to find a chance. However, in order to change Ru Yi’s heart, you first need to obtain the Duke and his wife’s support. I can tell you that they are the people who Miss Ru Yi respects the most. Since you’ve already decided to be with Ru Yi, why not gain the support of the Duke and his wife?”

Lan Xun’s eyes lit up when he heard this, and he vigorously slapped his thigh. “That’s right! How come I didn’t think of that? Nian Bing, I am now woke because of you. Alright, I’ll go and discuss matchmaking with Lord Duke. If Lord Duke agrees to our marriage, everything will be much easier.” As soon as he finished speaking, he turned around and was about to walk away.

“What’re you hurrying for?” Nian Bing said and grabbed Lan Xun. “The Duke and his wife will be here soon to sample my dishes. Wouldn’t it better to propose marriage to them with Miss Ru Yi present? It would be a much more obvious sign of your sincerity. Look, they’re on their way right now.” As he was speaking, Duke Lan Yu, Yu Ru Yan, and Ru Meng had all entered the training grounds from the rear courtyard. Lan Yu and Yu Ru Yan’s faces were strangely gloomy, while Ru Meng’s head was lowered—as if something heavy was weighing down on her heart.

Nian didn’t know that the misunderstanding they had about him had been brought to light yet, thus when he saw their faces, his heart immediately sang. He nudged Lan Xun. “You still haven’t gone?”

Ru Yi was the only thing on Lan Xun's mind at the moment, thus he didn't notice everyone's expressions. When Nian Bing nudged him, he hurriedly walked until he was standing in front of the Duke and his wife.

Yu Ru Yan was somewhat lost in her own world when Lan Xun approached them. When she sensed someone near them, she snapped to, only to find that it was actually Lan Xun, the person she was looking for. Her anger immediately surged, but right as she was about to speak, Lan Xun knelt to the ground and said, "Lord Duke, Madam, Lan Xun has something to report."

Lan Yu raised his hand to stop Yu Ru Yan, who was about to go off. He calmly said, "Lan Xun, tell us."

Lan Xun swallowed, then shot a glance towards the not-so-distant frosty Ru Yi. After doing so, he began, "Lord Duke, Lan Xun has been receiving your and Madam's guidance ever since he was young, and today is no exception. Although Lan Xun knows he isn't worthy, in my heart, I've always regarded you as a father. However, there's something that I've never told you. Actually... three years ago, Ru Yi and I were in a relationship. As such, I hope that Lord Duke and Madam can permit me to take Ru Yi as my wife. I am sincere in my feelings for her." After saying this, he kowtowed to the Duke and his wife three times.

Lan Yu and Yu Ru Yan's anger were instantly replaced with shock and astonishment. Ru Meng, who'd kept her head lowered, also gazed at the kneeling Lan Xun with shock. They'd never expected Lan Xun to say something like this. Ru Yi, who was standing close by, stiffened up as her mind went blank. Lan Yu was

the most emotionally stable of them, and proceeded to ask, “You want to marry Ru Yi?”

Lan Xun nodded resolutely. “Please help me succeed, Lord Duke.”

Lan Yu’s brow wrinkled. “From what I’ve heard, you and Ru Yi’s relationship has been quite complicated. Ru Yi, come here.”

Ru Yi woke from her stunned state when she heard the Duke speak, but her eyes had become full of conflicting emotions. She shot Lan Xun a glance, then quickly hurried over to Duke Lan Yu. She respectfully said, “Lord Duke, the kitchen counter and stove have been prepared. They are ready for use at any time.” Even though she talking about the task that Duke Lan Yu had assigned her, she couldn’t control the trembling in her voice.

Lan Yu nodded, then turned to look towards Nian Bing, who was standing to the side. “Little Brother, I’ll have to trouble you to wait a moment. I have a private matter I must deal with.”

Nian Bing nodded. “Lord Duke need not be so polite. Talk about what you need to, I’ll begin cooking.” After saying this, he walked over to the counter. Yu Ru Yan wanted to say something, but she decided to hold off. She turned and gave her husband a look, indicating that should get straight to the main point.

Lan Yu’s voice was somewhat somber. “Lan Xun, I want you to explain your relationship with Ru Yi..”

Ru Yi gave her little sister a look, then answered first, “Lord Duke, there’s no need to explain anything. There’s no relationship between Lan Xun and I, nor will I marry him. Ru Yi desires to spend her whole life waiting on Lord Duke and Madam, never marrying. Please grant my request, Lord Duke.” Her tone was extremely firm, while her icy voice seemed to freeze the air around her.

Shock filled Lan Xun. He knew that Ru Yi was obstinate, but he hadn’t thought that in the two years since he’d seen her, her stubbornness would actually grow even stronger.

Lan Yu smiled, and his tone became gentle as he spoke, “Silly girl. I’ve raised you and Lan Xun since you were young. What Lan Xun just said was not wrong. I’ve always take you two to be my children. To me, you aren’t my subordinates, you’re my family. Child, do you really think a father wants to see his own daughter grow old alone? No, of course not. That would cause a father indescribable suffering. Even if you don’t want to marry Lan Xun, that doesn’t mean there’s a need to be so against marriage as a whole. I’ll definitely find you a good home.”

His kind words caused Ru Yi’s eyes to turn red. She replied in a choked voice, “Thank you, Lord Duke. I...”

Lan Yu stopped her before she could continue. He then turned to Lan Xun and said coldly, “Right now I don’t need an explanation from you. I only want to hear the history of your relationship with Ru Yi. Tell me, I believe that you won’t lie to me.”

Lan Xun remained kneeling, as he wouldn’t rise without

receiving Lan Yu's permission. "Lord Duke, Ru Yi and I began going out three years ago. Maybe this is a joke to you, but I used to like Miss Chen Chen. Even though I knew I didn't suit her, I always unconsciously hoped that I would have a chance. As such, I worked hard."

Lan Yu nodded. "Everyone could see your meticulous care and concern for Chenchen. It's not always a matter of being suited or not being suited to one another; if Chenchen had really like you, I wouldn't have stopped it. However, you know her situation. Even Ru Yan and I are worried about her marriage situation. Right now, her future is very uncertain." His expression dimmed as he said this, while Ru Yan helplessly shook her head.

She felt regretful as she thought of her daughter. If it not for those people's urgent pursuit, she would not have given her daughter as that person's disciple. Duke Lan Yu then said, "But you of all people should have known that Chen Chen always treated you as an older brother. Although she's normally cold and detached, her relationship is best with you, barring me and Ru Yan."

Lan Xun replied, "Lord Duke, I knew about that. That day, Miss Chen Chen told me that she'd always regarded me as an older brother, and that for a particular reason, she couldn't get married. Even though her tone was cold, I was still able to sense her sincerity. Thus... I felt like I'd been freed from the bindings that were my feelings. From that moment on, I gave up on my pursuit of Miss Chen chen. When she left, the years of my feelings left with her. Although I felt at ease, I was still full of loss.

“It was then that Ru Yi entered my world. She cared about me, accompanied me, and silently sat beside me for a night. That night, we simply sat there in silence. However, even though she didn’t say anything, I was still able to sense the feelings in her heart. I discovered then and there that the person most suited for me had always been by my side. I was moved so much so that my feelings for Miss Chen turned into love for my sister. Once I realized this, I faced my feelings for Ru Yi and began to pursue her seriously. Lord Duke, Ru yi can’t marry anyone else, because she and I are already husband and wife.”

Nian Bing had already arrived behind the counter setup for him, but when he heard Lan Xun’s narrative, he couldn’t help but stop and listen to his entire explanation. As a bystander, he could tell that Duke Lan Yu and Yu Ru Yan already had a certain level of knowledge about what was going on. Based on Ru Meng’s strange attitude, it was very possible that Duke Lan Yu and Yu Ru Yan already knew the story that he was telling. As for their present anger, it was obviously directed towards Lan Xun. It seemed that they’d heard Ru and Lan Xun’s tale from Ru Meng.

Lan Xun had had pretty good luck to bring up marriage, as the duke was about to launch a punitive force against him. This might his chance to turn the situation around. However, the most important factor was Ru Yi, but it looked like she was an ice cube not so easily melted. Lan Xun, it’s all up to you.

When Lan Xun said that he and Ru Yi were already husband and wife, both Lan Yu and Yu Ru Yan’s faces turned ashen, despite them already knowing. Lan Xun snuck a glance at Ru Yi, only to find that her expression hadn’t changed at all despite his narrative. She was still coldly looking away and acting like she hadn’t heard

him at all. When he saw this, he sighed silently, then continued to recount what he'd told Nian Bing earlier with more detail. As he did so, his narrative finally seemed to have an effect on her.

When he arrived at the part about the misunderstanding between, the ice cube that was Ru Yi finally melted. The ice mountain instantly turned into an erupting volcano. “You’re bullshitting! You clearly said you always regarded me as a replacement! Stop with your insulting words! You’re just trying to deceive Lord Duke and Madam! Get the fuck off, I don’t want to see you, much less marry you!”

Chapter 74.1 - Four Great Experts Of The Phoenix Clan

Lan Xun's expression morphed again. "Ru Yi, couldn't you just calm down and think over it carefully? I waited for you for two years, in hopes that you would calm down. However, you are still stubborn as ever. Do you think feeling that way is good for you? Why can't you reason through it? The Ru Yi I grew up with wasn't like this. I don't dare say that I am a true gentleman but I, Lan Xun, have never told a lie to Lord Duke. In front of you, I swear that everything I said was the complete truth. Otherwise may I be smote by heaven and earth."

Ru Yi stared blankly, then her eyes filled with anger, no intention of being calm. "What are you saying today. No matter how you put it, there is no longer a relationship between you and me. Did you ask Lord Duke for my hand today because you wanted to humiliate me?"

Lan Xun sighed. "Ru Yi, why do you think that way? You hold an important place in my heart. You are my lover! For two years, you have been carrying out a mission in the foreign border, and there hasn't been a day that I haven't missed you. I asked Lord Duke for your hand because I love you! What do I have to do for you to believe in me?"

Ru Yi's heart quivered. The anger in her face gradually abated as she saw the sincerity painted clearly across Lan Xun's handsome face. She looked at him dully. How could she believe, when it was just a misunderstanding?

Lan Yu finally spoke. “Enough. You two don’t need to say anything else; I understand the situation. No matter, the one that used provoking and hurtful words was Lan Xun. Lan Xun, you have been with me for many years, so you know my temper. Ru Yi, you have suffered. Don’t worry; I will definitely give you a chance to vent. From now on, you and Ru Meng will be considered as my foster daughters. Since Lan Xun has hurt my daughter, then he must pay the appropriate price. Lan Xun, you do not need to explain anything. My daughter has gone to the borderlands for over two years and suffered who knows how much because of you. Now there are no more feelings between you and her. However, the pain you have given her can’t ever be erased. That’s why you must kill yourself.”

“What?” Three people cried out in shock in sync. One was Ru Yi, the other two were Yu Ru Yan and Nian Bing.

Yu Ru Yan said nervously, “Big Brother Yu, you can’t blame everything on Lan Xun. He has been with you for many years; don’t you know his personality? How could you so hastily decide his punishment? Big brother Yu...”

Nian Bing had already walked over to Lan Xun. It was him who exhorted Lan Xun to propose marriage to Duke Lan Yu. Now that this situation had arisen, how could he not be nervous. “Yes! Lord Duke, Lan Xun did make a mistake, but it’s not one deserving of death. How can you so abruptly decide a person’s fate?” This rash decision had made his impression of the duke fall, so much so that all his good impression of the duke’s household had vanished.

A layer of frost covered Duke Lan Yu’s face. He said calmly, “Ru

Yan, I heed your advice on other matters, but I can't this time. Do you think Lan Xun did nothing wrong? Indeed, it was a misunderstanding, but as a man, he knew his own misunderstanding but did not explain to Ru Yi. What is this an indicator of? Obviously, he was just playing with Ru Yi's heart, and, he even put his own dignity before Ru Yi's. If he had explained to her earlier, was more patient with her, would Ru Yi have suffered for these two years? Ru Yi has experienced much in her life. Now receiving such a blow, you would have me be merciful? Nian Bing, previously we blamed you mistakenly, but this is an internal affair so please do not interfere. Lan Xun, do as you will."

Duke Lan Yu's tone was extremely decisive, but Nian Bing felt that something was strange. There was a hint of a smile in his eyes. Was he just being delusional? No, it was no illusion. He really was smiling. His mind was sent into a whirl and in the next instant, Nian Bing understood the reason behind everything. He gave Duke Lan Yu a look, then sighed and took a step back. He did not try to stop him.

Lan Xun raised his head and looked straight at Lan Yu, then at Ru Yi. His face was unnaturally calm. With utmost respect he began, "Duke Lan Yu, you have raised me since I was young. My life is yours. If you order me to do something, I will not rebel. I, I only have one last request in the face of death. I hope you can grant it." He was crouched on the ground, his courage while looking at death made Nian Bing swell with admiration.

Lan Yu said coolly. "Say it. Seeing as you have been with me for so many years, I will do my utmost to help you achieve it."

Lan Xun did not have any fear because of his impending death. When he heard Duke Lan Yu promise him, his whole face immediately lit up. “Lord Duke, I really, truly love Ru Yi. You spoke the truth. It was I who did not let go of my face long enough to coax Ru Yi, and so that she spent over two years suffering, casting unforgettable shadows on her heart. Everything is my fault, so I should be punished. My final request is to ask you to take care of Ru Yi. Find Ru Yi a good husband that can take care of her, cherish her. So that even if I am no longer to be on this earth, I can die content. Lord Duke, Madam, you must take care of yourselves. Lan Xun will go now. Even if I am to go to hell, I will definitely pray for Lord Duke and Madam’s safety.”

A cold light flashed and his longsword was drawn from his sheath. He moved without any hesitation. With his two hands gripped on the handle, he was almost about to use all of his strength to slice his neck. The sunlight shone and the sword flashed brilliantly. Although he wasn’t using qi, anyone could see that he would die.

Yu Ru Yan shut her eyes, tears streaming down her face. Normally, Lan Yu would always listen to her, but if he was serious, she could not go against him. She had also watched Lan Xun grow up. At the moment he was to lose his life, she truly could not take it. She stealthily lifted up her right arm and was about to use qi to save him. For her, there was no difference in having her eyes closed or open. However, when she raised her hand, Duke Lan Yu speedily gripped her arm. She struggled against him but could not throw him off. She then knew that there was not enough time. Her heart pulsed violently, and she thought, It’s over.

“No,” came a scream. Yu Ru Yan opened her eyes only to see Ru

Yi grabbing Lan Xun's hands, her eyes filled with sadness. "No! You can't die."

Lan Xun said sadly, "Ru Yi, do you have to be like this? You know that for us, Lord Duke's every sentence is a command. You can't stop me. Promise that you will live well from now on."

Ru Yi disregarded him. While forcefully gripping his arm, she turned to Duke Lan Yu. "Lord Duke, oh, no, Adoptive Father, I beg you: please let Lan Xun go."

Lan Yu snorted coldly. "Ru Yi, he hurt you so deeply. How can I let him go? You are my daughter; no one is allowed to bully you. Move out of the way. I will definitely find you a good husband."

Ru Yi vigorously shook her head, her tears flying off her face because of her movements. "No, no, Adoptive Father, I don't want anyone else. I only want Lan Xun. Please, I beg you, forgive him. He is the only one I will love my entire life."

The smile reappeared in Lan Yu's eyes. Only Ru Yi, in her excitement, and Lan Xun, who was depressed because of his impending suicide, didn't notice it. "Ru Yi, haven't you fallen out of love with him? You just said that you wouldn't marry him. You know, military orders are like a mountain. I have already issued an order; it cannot be so easily taken back."

Ru Yi knelt in front of Lan Yu and sobbed, "Adoptive Father, I was speaking out of anger. I have always loved Lan Xun and now I see, that it's all my fault. I was too extreme. If It weren't for my

jealousy, my incessant nagging wouldn't have forced Lan Xun's hand. He wouldn't say such things, really. Lan Xun didn't do anything wrong; it was all me. Adoptive Father, if you want to punish someone, punish me. Please, I beg you, don't kill Lan Xun. He is a good person. His loyalty for me, even if it didn't bear success, deserves credit. Please."

Lan Yu sighed and said, "But I already gave the order. It cannot be so easily changed. In that case, if you marry him, he will become my son-in-law, so I will spare his life. Otherwise, there is no reason for him to continue living. Ru Yi, do you want to marry Lan Xun?"

"Yes, oh yes, I want to. Adoptive Father, I want to marry him; don't kill him." Ru Yi spoke almost without thinking. Lan Xun's grip on the sword relaxed and clattered to the ground with a clang. Yu Ru Yan looked at her husband with astonishment, but saw him laugh heartily. "Yes, it is better to be friendly. You children have worried me. Now it is good. Lan Xun, I am betrothing you to my precious daughter, Ru Yi. From now on you must take care of her, love and protect her. If you dare bully her again, hmph, don't blame me for not being polite."

Although Lan Xun was willing to die for the Duke, even the mole crickets and ants live out their existences. And he was a human! Obviously it would be best if he didn't have to die. Now, he and Ru Yi were like a broken mirror made whole. Everything was wonderful now. He could scarcely believe that great sorrow had turned into great happiness. However, his mind was still sharp. He grabbed Ru Yi's hands and prostrated himself to Lan Yu.

"Ouch!" The imposing, threatening Lord Duke suddenly

shrieked, scaring Ru Yi and Lan Xun who lept up from the ground. However, all they saw Yu Ru Yan gripping Lan Yu's ears.

“Well, Lan Yu, you were just putting on a show just now, weren't you? Even fooled me. Say, what are you going to do about giving me so much grief?”

“Let go, Ru Yian, let go. I know I was wrong, but hear me out! If there hadn't been some truth to my performance, how could I have gotten Ru Yi to show her true feelings? Did you think that I would kill Lan Xun? Both of them were wrong, but Lan Xun was the man after all. Giving him a bit of grief in exchange for a flower and jade like wife is letting him off easy.”

Lan Xun and Ru Yi exchanged glances. Simultaneously, they blushed bright red and knelt back on the ground. “Thank you for everything, Lord Duke,” they chorused.

Yu Ru Yan shook off Lan Yu and said, “You're still calling him Lord Duke? From now on you must call us Adoptive Father and Adoptive Mother. You children can run off now. I really am too excited. Stand up now.”

Nian Bing suddenly felt a bit of jealousy from where he stood by Lan Xun. If he and Feng Nu could get some help from their seniors to get married, wouldn't that be great!? Duke Lan Yu was no doubt the number one person in the Profound Orchid Empire. His ability to manipulate his subordinates was second to none. If he had not seen that hint, perhaps even he would have been fooled. Superior acting skills!

Ru Yi and Lan Xun stood, and she shook of his hand. At the moment, her heart had been unlocked. The frosty gaze had turned into a warm spring well. She turned to Nian Bing and said, “Mister Nian, I am sorry. Last time I was too impulsive. I didn’t try to investigate the situation, and I tried to kill you. Please forgive me. The truth is that I could see that you weren’t that type of person. I just didn’t want to admit defeat. I apologize.”

Nian Bing smiled. “Although it’s hard to bear the feelings of being wrongly accused, it is all in the past now. Congratulations, Miss Ru Yi, on your union with Brother Lan Xun. I do not have anything of value on me, but I am making a meal for Auntie Yu today. You are welcome to try it; it will be my gift to the happy couple.”

For the ordinary person, a meal as a gift would seem too cheap. But no one cared about that, and just took it as a sign of Nian Bing’s goodwill. But how were they to know that Nian Bing’s meal would be worth over a thousand gold coins not long in the future? The skills of the Magic Chef of Ice and Fire was not something just anyone could sample.

Yu Ru Yan walked over to Nian Bing and apologized. “Nian Bing, I blamed you wrongly. It was Auntie’s mistake; can you forgive her?”

Nian Bing shook his head and smiled. “Auntie, you did not do anything wrong. We have only met twice after all. If it were me, I would also believe my own subordinate. Auntie, do you still want me to have the Heavenly Flower Tile?” In front of the

devastatingly beautiful auntie, Nian Bing could not blame her. At the moment, he was only thinking: A mother cannot be faulted for blaming her child.

“Of course.” Yu Ru Yi took out the Heavenly Flower Tile from her robes and put it back around Nian Bing’s neck. It was warm from her body heat and when it pressed against his chest, Nian Bing felt extremely comfortable outwardly and inwardly.

“Auntie, I will now make a meal for you. It’s also about lunchtime, so please sit at that table. I will go ask as fast as possible.” He went over to the stove.

Yu Ru Yan and Lan Yu smiled at each other. They were also very curious about the meal that Nian Bing insisted on making for them. The two led Lan Xun and Ru Yi and Ru Meng over to the table next to the stove. Ru Yi had brought out ten chairs before, so there were still empty spaces.

Chapter 74.2 - Four Great Experts Of The Phoenix Clan

Lan Yu held onto Yu Ru Yan's hand, Lan Xun held onto Ru Yi's hand, and the five people all focused on Nian Bing.

Nian Bing inhaled deeply to calm his emotions. At this very moment, his heart was eerily still. He then flicked his right hand, and nine cucumbers appeared out of his space ring. He spaced them out evenly on the chopping board. For today's meal, he didn't just prepare his ingredients; he even had prepared the kitchen utensils he was going to use. A plate, one meter in diameter, appeared right after the nine cucumbers onto his left hand. He flicked his right hand again, and like a pool of autumn water, Proud Sky appeared in his grasp, bringing with it its wind aura.

He smiled at the people standing in front of the stove. "Auntie Yu, you are most likely somewhat parched. My first dish is the embodiment of ice, and is also the dish I am most expert at in the set of the Ice and Fire Nine Layer Heavens–The Nine Mysterious Dragons Concealed in Clouds of Ice."

The Proud Sky Knife danced swept across the chopping board gracefully and tossed the nine cucumbers into the air. Nian Bing set the giant plate onto the tabletop. The cucumbers fell onto the plate evenly. They were not quite a third of a meter, so they were somewhat in discord on the giant plate. Lightning fast, Nian Bing pinched one of the cucumbers. Proud Sky was about to move when urgent footsteps cut off his concentration. A Silver Feather cavalryman came running in.

“I am here to report.” The horseman knelt on one knee shifting the Duke and the others attention from Nian Bing.

“Speak,” commanded Lan Yu.

“Reporting to Lord Duke, four people have come calling themselves acquaintances of Madam. They requested audience.”

“Oh?” Lan Yu gave Yu Ru Yan a surprised look. Normally, very few people came to look for his wife. “What kind of people are they? Any special characteristics?”

The cavalryman answered him respectfully. “There are two men and two women. The two women are very young, and they are also devastatingly beautiful. The two men are older, about seventy or eighty years in appearance. What’s particularly striking about them is that they are clothed all in red, like flames. The one who spoke was a woman. They should be warriors; all of them were carrying longswords. I could not sense their rank, but they cannot be weak; their aura was intense.”

No doubt this was someone from the Silver Feather Cavalry; his answer was extremely succinct, but he described the visitors thoroughly.

Yu Ru Yan’s expression changed. She said to Nian Bing, “Getting to eat your meal is not as simple as it seems. They have finally arrived. Nian Bing, you should go back and rest first; Auntie has something to take care of.”

Duke Lan Yu's expression changed at the same time. "Ru Yan, are you saying these are the people from there?"

A cold light flashed in her eyes. "Yes, it's definitely then. What other seventy, eighty-year-old men would wear red clothes. I know which four these are. When our first daughter was executed, the debt should have been settled. Yu ge, tell our people to back off."

Lan Yu nodded and said to the cavalryman, "Let them in. Also pass down my order: without my consent, no matter what happens here on the training field, no one can interfere."

"Yes, Lord Duke." The cavalrymen stood up and left. Lan Yu turned to Lan Xun as well as Ru Yi and Ru Meng. "You are my children, not outsiders. You should be able to see what is the peak of a warrior. You should go over to the wall with Nian Bing. Remember, no matter what happens, you must not interfere. Got it?"

Lan Xun, Ru Yi, and Ru Meng, would unconditionally follow Lan Yu's orders. They each made noises of agreement. Lan Xun pulled on Nian Bing, who was still holding Proud Sky Knife, over to the side of the yard. Nian Bing faintly sensed that something was going to happen; before going over to the side, he didn't forget to put away his plate and cucumbers. He had made the resolution to repay Yu Ru Yan's kindness with a meal; before that happened he would not leave.

The gates opened, and in the next moment, four Silver Feather

Cavalrymen led in the four red-cad people. Just as that cavalryman had said, the four people were dressed entirely in red and carried identical swords. The two old men walked into view first. They were both tall and thin, their white hair set off by their red clothes. What was particularly strange was that they walked ramrod straight and their bodies were giving off an formless domineering aura. The oppressing aura, without further examination, was obviously not ordinary. The two were pretty similar looking; they should be brothers. Their cold faces were locked on Ru Yu Yan when they passed through the entrance.

Behind the two old men were the two young girls. The girl on the left had a head of long, green hair. Paired with her red warrior clothes, she seemed to shine; it was extremely striking. Although red and green shouldn't go very well together, for this girl, it was just a particular style for her. On top of that, she had a pair of dark green eyes, a face beautiful as a cool breeze and an extremely well-proportioned figure. She glided rather than walked, adding to the profound impression that she gave people. But though she was beautiful, she paled in comparison to the girl on her right.

The girl on the right looked to be a little younger. Her pink hair was neatly combed to hang behind her, bound by a blue hair binder in the middle. Her eyes were as azure as the sky and sparkled with hidden depth. A slender body was paired with her astonishingly beautiful legs, almost perfect without a single blemish. Out of everyone here, only Yu Ru Yan could manage to hold up against her. Yu Ru Yan had more charm, but lacked some of the youth of springtime.

The four cavalrymen stepped back quietly after they led them in, and Yu Ru Yan stepped forward to greet them, eyes full of killing

intent.

“Feng Nu.” Nian Bing’s joy-filled voice broke through the deadly atmosphere on the training field. The pink-haired, red clad girl trembled all over her. When she saw Nian Bing, an electric shock ran through her. Faster than the eye could see, she ran over to Nian Bing. This girl really was Feng Nu, who he had parted from not long ago from the dragon’s cave.

“Nian Bing, Nian Bing, is it really you?” Her normally calm face had been moistened with tears. Her voice was choked up, and she was gripping Nian Bing’s hands tightly. She was trembling slightly due to excitement.

If Feng Nu was moved, how could Nian Bing not be? At this very moment, he could not see anyone else. He forgot everything else and spread open his arms, embracing Feng Nu tightly. That beautiful body was trembling slightly in his embrace. In this instant, Nian Bing felt his heart become impossibly felt. The only thing in his heart was Feng Nu; he could not stop the surge of his emotions. He knew that in this world, Feng Nu was the first person he had fallen in love with. If it was said his feelings contained some pity for Long Ling, then all he felt was pure, unadulterated love with Feng Nu. Senseless, defiant love. After going through life and death trials, both Nian Bing and Feng Nu carried each other in their hearts indescribably clearly. They embraced without minding anything else, feeling each other’s heartbeat.

Yu Ru Yan said coldly, “I’m not the only precedent in the Phoenix Clan. Feng Xu, Feng Kong, your control on your clansmen has become weak.”

A light sparked in the eyes of the elder on the left, whom Yu Ru Yan had called Feng Xu. A red light. “Feng Nu, what are you doing? Who is he?”

Feng Nu shuddered all over as she remembered where she was. She violently pushed Nian Bing away and turned to look at Feng Xu. Quietly she said, “Great Elder, Nian Bing is my friend. I told you about him.”

The fire in Feng Xu’s eyes intensified. “Feng Nu, you must remember the clan laws. I don’t need your explanation. Now do it, kill him, and I will take it as nothing happened.”

Yu Ru Yan retorted fiercely, “Feng Xu, don’t forget, this is not your Phoenix Perch Mountain. This is my husband, the duke’s residence. If you dare kill people here, don’t blame me for being impolite with the Phoenix Clan.”

Feng Xu replied back equally as coldly, “Little Yan, when your father passed away he gave you to us to raise. We did raise you and passed onto you the teachings of the Phoenix Clan, but you betrayed your kinsmen and our beliefs, and partnered with a human. Today not even you and your husband will be let off, not even to mention that boy. Feng Nu, why haven’t you done it yet?”

Since Feng Nu left his embrace, Nian Bing had snapped to. He carefully grasped the situation on the field, and after hearing Yu Ru Yan and the Phoenix Clan elder’s dialogue, he immediately understood much more. His respected Auntie Yu Ru Yan and Feng

Nu were both members of the Phoenix Clan. She had left the Phoenix Clan for Duke Lan Yu. The elders had come here to cause trouble.

It was too laughable to imagine that the Phoenix Clan elders could make Feng Nu kill him. He smiled and looked at Feng Nu. “Are you going to kill me?”

Emotions overcame Feng Nu’s face. She suddenly moved, nearing Nian Bing again. She pressed her palm directly to Nian Bing’s chest. Nian Bing just felt a scorching air wrap around his body and he flew, tumbling over clouds, into the air. At the same time, he heard Feng Nu buzz in his ear like a mosquito. “Play dead, otherwise Elder won’t let you go. Our Phoenix Clan is not like the Fire Dragon People. You must not utter a single sound.” He slammed into the wall. Nian Bing’s body slowly slid to the ground. At the moment of contact, the scorching air poured out from behind him and morphed into a cushion, preventing him from getting hurt.

Although Nian Bing was shocked, he was smart enough to know he should do as Feng Nu told him. When he slid to the ground, he closed his eyes and did not move.

Silver qi filled the air like smoke. Feng Nu suddenly felt like she was choking. Immediately, her heart filled with shock and she unsheathed Divine Heavenly Flame without hesitation, but she didn’t even have a chance to turn around. She appeared to be a red blur as she attempted to hold off the mountain-sized attack.

Feng Xu bellowed loudly, “How brazen!”

Several explosions occurred in quick succession on the training field. Lan Yu faced off against the two Phoenix Clan elders at the center of the field. His chest heaved, his breathing uneven. Yu Ru Yan was already at Nian Bing's side, checking the pulse in his wrist. Feng Nu coughed up blood, and was brought over to the side by Elder Feng Xu. Feng Xu and Feng Kong's faces had turned to shock.

Elder Feng Kong's eyebrows were creased slightly. "Little Yan, in the ten years I haven't seen you, your strength has progressed greatly!"

Yu RU Yan did not pay heed to Elder Feng Kong. When she saw Nian Bing was fine, she reminded Lan Xun and the other two, "Protect Nian Bing. Remember what Lord Duke said; definitely do not interfere." After this, she flashed away, almost instantaneously returning to her husband's side. "It really has been ten years since I last saw you. If our first daughter had lived; she would have been almost nineteen."

When he heard what Yu Ru Yan said, Lan Yu's eyes brimmed with killing intent. The bloodlust and murderous intent sharpened and polished by the battlefield even alarmed the Phoenix Clan elders slightly.

Feng Xu said coldly, "It's a pity, she's already dead. Little Yan, you have avoided us for many years and had another child. Even if you were Great Elder's daughter, you cannot violate our clan's laws. Today we have come in order to settle this problem. If you kill the man next to you and turn over your daughter, I will not

only permit you to return to the Phoenix Clan, I will also appoint you clan elder. You should know what a great honor that is.”

Yu Ru Yan’s eyes sparked coldly. “I indeed know. When I was young, becoming a Phoenix Clan elder was my goal. But now, none of that is important to me. I only know that you want to kill my daughter so you are my enemies. Ever since you killed my daughter, you cut off all connection between me and the Phoenix Clan. There is only hatred. In respect for you raising me and passing down the Phoenix Clan’s skills to me, I have not gone to seek revenge. I didn’t think that you would actually come here looking for a fight. Well fine then, since you want to finish it, then we shall. For you four, my husband and I are enough to get revenge for my daughter.”

She touched her lily-white hands to her waist, and a silver light resembling a nimble snake appeared. It was a meter long soft sword. It was silver. Yu Ru Yan lightly flicked her wrist, and the soft sword became ramrod straight. The sword pulsed with silver light. This was definitely a treasure sword.

Lan Yu also made his moved. He also touched his waist area and took out a soft sword. However, his soft sword was blue and it was a little thicker than Yu Ru Yan’s silver sword. The soft sword had stiffened up, and he pointed it at the two Phoenix Clan elders. “Come at me; you need not worry; Ru Yan and I will definitely secure victory.”

Feng Xu and Feng Kong’s eyes filled with red light. “Since it’s like that, there is no need for talking. Feng Nu and Feng Xiang, Soaring Nine Flames.” Fire red qi immediately filled the air. Feng Nu and

the other young woman emitted Nine Flames qi. The two girls grunted at the same time and soared into the air in a streak of fire. At the same time, Feng Xu and Feng Kong took out their fire red swords. Their qi immediately turned silver, and they stepped forward at the same time with imposing might. Although the swords did not travel far, they emitted an ear piercing shriek. Obviously, qi lifted its limits.

Chapter 75.1 - Thunder Dragon Body And The Fifth Phoenix

With Lan Xun and the other two in front of him, Nian Bing leaned back against the courtyard wall. He then surreptitiously opened his eyes just in time to see a silver light simultaneously emerge from both Yu Ru Yan and Lan Xun. With the addition of the two Phoenix Clan elders, this was obviously a battle between four martial saints! Nian Bing groaned. Why did he always meet strong people like this? His heart swelled with desire for strength .

Four swords met one another, but none of them contained any flashiness. When they met, qi clashed in the sky above them. The superiority of each of their qi's strength was instantly decided by this clash. Lan Yu was pushed back by Elder Feng Xu a single step, while Elder Feng Kong was jolted backwards by Yu Ru Yan two steps. The strongest of the four had actually turned out to be the only woman among them.

Silver light flashed once more as Feng Lei moved. Both Feng Nu and the green haired Feng Xiang pounced forwards at the same time. The moment that Feng Nu's Heavenly Flame Sword was about to reach Lan Yu, it suddenly glowed with a silver luster and fell to the side. Feng Xiang wasn't in any easier of a situation when this happened, as she was facing the strongest of them, Yu Ru Yan.

Yu Ru Yan was currently overflowing with killing intent, and her movements didn't contain any mercy. She didn't even spare Feng Xiang a glance when she lifted up her left hand to block her attack. Silver qi condensed into the shape of a sword in her hand and then clashed with Feng Xiang's sword. The sound of metal striking

metal rang out when the two swords connected. Feng Xiang was sent flying from the strike, and spat out a mouthful of blood midair. If it hadn't been for Elder Feng Kong's timely approach, which had split Yu Ru Yan's attention, it was highly likely that she would've been seriously injured.

Both Lan Yu and Yu Ru Yan hadn't expected Feng Nu to have so much strength. Even though Lan Yu sent her reeling, he also had to face Elder Feng Xu's attack. Elder Feng Xu issued the cry of a phoenix as he swung his red sword towards Lan Yu right before Feng Nu was sent reeling backwards. The sound of clashing qi, metal, and phoenix cries instantly resounded. Afterwards, Lan Yu groaned as he was forced back several steps. The clothing around his chest had been torn, and several red lines were now visible across his chest. His face had also become much paler.

Feng Xu was about to follow up on his previous attack when his vision was suddenly filled with a silver colored expanse. In an impressive display of power, Yu Ru Yan formed a ring of qi with her soft sword and entrapped Feng Xu and Feng Kong within it. The moment they were entrapped, the sounds of attacks colliding with one another continuously rang out. Yu Ru Yan didn't back, despite facing two elders at the same time.

Her strength had not only far surpassed the two elders' expectations, but it had even caused Nian Bing's jaw to drop in shock. He'd never expected the auntie he'd called mother would have this much power. Yu Ru Yan's couldn't simply be described as strong anymore, as she was able to withstand the onslaught of two martial saints. One's martial rank obviously wasn't everything, as there are even differences in strength within the same rank.

Suddenly, a bellow as loud as a thunderclap resounded and drowned every other noise. Lan Yu, who'd received a wound, suddenly transformed following the bellow. His warrior clothing grew tighter and tighter, until it suddenly ripped apart, which exposed his bulging muscles. The marks he'd received on his chest were still visible, but his body now emanated an eerie blue luster. His wounds began to knit back together as the rest of his body continued to swell. The definition of his muscles now resembled granite, while his eyes had turned completely blue, and his short hair had begun to stand straight up on his head. He'd swelled significantly in size, so much so that he was much taller than before he'd transformed. His handsome face was now filled with killing intent, and the scent of iron and blood seemed to swirl around his body.

"It's the thunder dragon body," Lan Xun exhaled when he saw the transformation.

Nian Bing stood up and quietly asked, "What's the thunder dragon body?"

Lan Xun looked at Nian Bing, who appeared to have recovered, in surprise. He then explained, "Among the greater dragons of yore, there was never a thunder-type dragon. As such, the Lord Duke's thunder dragon body is a type of berserker physique. He can stimulate, and in turn transform, his body, qi, and blood vessels to increase his defensive power and recovery ability several folds. At the same time, his attacks become more wild.

"He'll become weak for a while once he's used it, but it's still the strongest physique that any human warrior possesses. It's called

the ‘thunder dragon body’ because when one’s defensive ability is defensive power is increased, their muscles have the same effect as a dragon’s scales. Furthermore, the Lord Duke’s qi type is the rare thunder attribute, which is also where his physique gets its name from. The Lord Duke’s berserker physique’s largest advantage lies in that he remains conscious. Normally, berserker’s can only rely on their subconsciousness once they’ve entered the berserk state. As such, they normally can’t distinguish friend from foe. However, the Lord Duke is somehow able to maintain his consciousness. His strength is hard for someone of my abilities to fathom.”

As Lan Xun was describing what was happening to Nian Bing, Lan Yu made his move. His qi, although still the holy qi that represented a martial saint, had turned, but its strength had become several times stronger. He’d discarded his soft sword and had opted to use his fists as weapons. Every punch he sent out carried the force of a sky-rending thunderclap. He only needed two punches to force both Feng Xu and Feng Kong back.

Feng Xu coldly replied, “It seems that your thunder dragon body has entered the complete state. No wonder you have such fame in the Profound Orchid Empire. However, the true battle begins now.” Feng Xu then let out a resonant phoenix cry, which was then closely echoed by Feng Kong, Feng Nu, and Feng Xiang. Their mellow pitches then intertwined together in the air. The first one to transform was Feng Xiang, who raised her arms up and made movements like she was flapping her wings. Re qi swelled around her and began to set her alight. As this happened, the scorching air fissured the ground beneath her. Even her sword turned a golden-red color. The expression in her burning red eyes was indiscernible as she flashed to Lan Yu and Yu Ru Yan’s side.

Yu Ru Yan's eyes held a trace of surprise when she the transformation. "You don't look like you're past your twenties, yet you've already made it to the first transformation, 'phoenix flames'. You're quite a promising young lady. It's just a pity that you're my enemy. I may have made use of the phoenix flames, but I was a bit more leisurely than you. You must be the hope of this generation in the Phoenix Clan."

Feng Xu laughed coldly when she heard this. "Little Yan, that's where you're wrong. Feng Xiang is just the protector of the Phoenix Clan's hope. The true hope of the Phoenix Clan is Feng Nu." Her already impressive red wings were immediately followed by Feng Nu, Feng Xu, and Feng Kong's eyes all simultaneously turning golden. Their giant wings were then accompanied by a fiery hot air current. When the billowing air appeared, it immediately pushed Yu Ru Yan back a step, where she was abreast of her husband.

"Royal Wings." Yu Ru Yan was flabbergasted as her eyes met Feng Nu's golden eyes. "It seems that you're this generation's hope of the Phoenix Clan. How old are you?"

Feng Nu coldly replied, "I'm turning nineteen years old this year. Traitor of my clan, accept your death." Red light flashed as soon as she'd finished speaking, and her Heavenly Flame Sword shimmered like it was made of fire. Feng Nu's form then turned into a cloud of red as she spread giant wings. She truly resembled a phoenix as she rushed towards Yu Ru Yan, swelling with power.

Nian Bing was astonished at the present situation. He'd seen Feng Nu use her Royal Wings before, but Feng Nu had told him

that she'd need a long time to recover her regular strength once she had. However, now it appeared that, not only had she recovered, but she had enough strength to completely utilize the second transformation ability of the Nine Phoenix Transformations. Both her offensive and defensive power had improve. What had happened?

Yu Ru Yan snorted coldly when she saw Feng Nu charge towards her. She glided forwards like a ghost, leaving afterimages in her wake. She then raised her soft sword into the air and stabbed towards Feng Nu's Heavenly Flame. With a pop, Feng Nu was sent flying backwards, where Feng Xiang caught her. Yu Ru Yan's emotionless face started at the four enemies from the Phoenix Clan. "The Royall Wings still aren't enough to threaten me. Young lady, we're both members of the same clan. Do you truly feel that the clan rules are correct? We were originally humans, weren't we? Why can't we love humans?"

Feng Nu steadied her churning qi and blood. When she'd crossed swords with Yu Ru Yan, she'd gained a deep insight into Yu Ru Yan's vast ocean of qi. Even with the aid of the royal wings and phoenix flames, she still couldn't cause any damage to Yu Ru Yan's defeat.

She couldn't help but shoot Nian Bing a glance when she heard Yu Ru Yan's words. When she saw that he was standing up, she couldn't help but feel anxiousness derail her thoughts.

Feng Xu and Feng Kong whistled at the same time, which caused the royal wings on their backs to spread wide open. They then took the skies, the golden-red flames surrounding their bodies

combusting quickly. Their silver hair had been dyed red, and their golden eyes were now glowing. They then simultaneously shouted, “Phoenix! Fantasy! Body!” When they did so, their substantial forms seemed to melt away into illusory flames. Burning wind swept through the air as the fire in the air congealed into a flaming tornado headed straight towards Yu Ru Yan and Lan Yu.

Yu Ru Yan’s body then turned into fog like her name. At the same time, her soft sword had begun to faintly vibrate. Lan Yu bellowed angrily and punched forwards with both of his fists, which caused two streams of deep blue light to collide with the blustering flame-tornado. The sound of thunderclaps accompanied the flame tornado.

Right before the tornado was about to strike Lan Yu, a figure appeared in the cool breeze between him and the flame tornado. Silver light exploded outwards, and Yu Yu Yan’s silver immediately bloomed like a flower; every single shriek emitted an intense cracking sound. The Red and silver light then immediately caused Nian Bing and the others to become dizzy. Boom! The center of the battleground had fissured deeply.

The four people separated immediately separated when this happened. Yu Ru Yan’s ample bosom undulated heavily, while her clothes had become disheveled. Lan Yu reached out to steady her, while Feng Xu and Feng Kong were sent reeling backwards. Feng Xiang, who was burning with phoenix flames, and Feng Nu, who’d spread out her royal wings, then formed a line.

Yu Ru Yan snorted in contempt. “You still haven’t advanced? You elders have cultivated for so many years, yet it seems that your

talent is limited. Perhaps you'll only be able to read the third Phoenix Transformation, the 'Phoenix Illusory Body'."

Feng Xu snorted coldly in reply. "And what about you? If you didn't know of our Phoenix Transformations, you wouldn't stand a chance against us. Little Yan, I'll give you one final chance: Kill the man next to you, and come back with us."

Yu Ru Yan snorted coldly when she heard this. "That's impossible. Yu ge is the person I love most. If I go back with you, I can't be together with Yu ge. The moment you killed my daughter, I stopped recognizing myself as a member of the Phoenix Clan. I exercised restraint with you previously for the sake of honoring what you've taught me. However, since you still want to kill someone I love, don't blame me for being impolite. I'll let you witness the true Phoenix Transformation. If you don't have talent and good perception, even you've cultivated twice as long as I have, you still won't be able to defeat me."

After she said this, the silver light around her began to ripple like flames. Just like Feng Xu and Feng Kong, the silver light began to turn red-gold. This was the Phoenix Royal Coan's specialty, Phoenix Flames. A pair of giant wings unfurled on her back. Almost instantly, Yu Ru Yan had completed the second transformation. The two Phoenix Clan elders could not help their astonishment at the speed.

"Yu ge, this is just between me and the Phoenix Clan. Please do not interfere." Her voice was cold when she said this, but was also full of confidence. Lan Yu looked at her with a complicated expression, then jumped over to where Nian Bing and the others

were. Just like Feng Xu and those from the Phoenix Clan, the silver light around her began to turn golden-red. These were the Phoenix Clan's special Phoenix Flames. A giant pair of wings then burst through her clothing and unfolded on either side of her. Yu Ru Yan had managed to complete the second transformation in less than a minute, which caused the two Phoenix Clan elder's expressions to change.

Feng Xu then asked, shocked, "Little Yan, you want to go one against four?"

Yu Ru Yan arrogantly replied, "Why can't I? You four, even together, are certainly not my opponents." She then flapped her wings lightly and launched into the sky. Her figure rocked from side to side and appeared somewhat illusory, just like she'd used the third Phoenix Transformation, the Phoenix Illusory Body. "When I left the Phoenix Clan, I'd just mastered the second transformation, the Royal Wings. Back then, I was far from being your opponent, thus I ran away with Yu ge. We didn't even dare to have our daughter be near us, for fear of a disastrous repeat event. However, it's different now. I not only have the ability to protect my daughter, but I can also crush you. Elders, if I remember correctly, the most astounding person in the Phoenix Clan cultivated to the fifth transformation. In the past few centuries, the most that the royal clan of the Phoenix Clan could achieve was the third transformation. Now, I'll let you all see the fourth transformation."

She then raised her towards the sky and issued a long cry. Golden flames immediately covered an area that was ten meters in diameter in the sky. The clouds turned blood red from the glow of the red light, and the fringes of her red wings began to glow with a

golden light. The strange thing was, the stronger looking flames didn't feel scorchingly hot. Only Feng Xu and Feng Kong understood that this was because of the level of solidification the flames had reached; they didn't leak any energy.

“Three! Part! Phoenix! Shadow!” Red light flashed through Yu Ru Yan's eyes as she shouted. Afterwards, three illusory figures that looked identical to Yu Ru Yan appeared, all three of which had the same red wings and golden eyes as her.

Chapter 75.2 - Thunder Dragon Body and the Fifth Phoenix Transformation

It should be known that the third Phoenix Transformation, the Illusory Phoenix Body, is the foundation for the fourth transformation, the Trifold Phoenix Shadow. The Trifold Phoenix Shadow would split one into three figures, all of which contained an equal amount of attack power. The jump from the third transformation to the fourth was definitely a qualitative leap in strength.

Feng Kong's voice trembled as he said, "Fourth transformation... it's actually the fourth transformation, the Trifold Phoenix Shadow! Little Yan, there's no doubt that you're the most remarkable talent of of our Phoenix Clan. Abandon the humans. I can make a personal request to Elder Brother on your behalf. We won't kill your husband or your daughter as long as you return with us."

The three Yu Ru Yan's all spoke at once and said, "Elder Kong, ever since I was young you've shown the utmost care for me. You were the most charitable one out of everybody in the clan. Thank you for your kind intentions, but as I've said, Yu ge is my most beloved. I will never leave him. You simply wouldn't understand."

Feng Xu coldly said, "Little Brother Kong, there's no need to engage in useless chatter with here. So what if she can use the fourth transformation. She might not necessarily be able to bring out the full strength of the Trifold Phoenix Shadow.

"Besides, even though we can't use the fourth transformation,

we've stringently cultivated our Nine Flames Qi for so many years; it's not something that she can match. If we attack both attack her while using the Illusory Phoenix Body, we'll definitely be able to defeat her and her stolen techniques."

Yu Ru Yan snorted coldly. "Is that what you believe? If the fourth transformation's no good, how about the fifth transformation?" The reddish-golden flames around her began to recede, and the speed of the light's pulsations began to slow.

"The true color of the phoenix's flames isn't red or gold. In the legends it's written that the phoenix we're descended from used a chicken's head, a snake's neck, a swallow's chin, a turtle's back, and a fish's tail to shape a five-colored feather. Eight years ago, I finally broke through from the fourth transformation and achieved the fifth. Perhaps you can't even imagine this."

The first things to change were the wings on each of the three Yu Ru Yan's backs. As the reddish-gold light pulsed, their wings began to ripple and change between five different colors. Even though reddish-gold remained the primary color, the five colors that washed across the wings were much more magnificent.

Yu Ru Yan flicked her wrist and cast her silver soft sword to the side. All three of her bodies simultaneously extended their right arms and condensed five-colored flames in them. The multicolored flame twisted and turned in each of their hands until it formed a one-meter long, plume shaped figure. Afterwards, all six of their wings began to flap in sync with one another, and an emblazoned voice split apart the heavens and the earth.

“Fifth Transformation: Five-Colored Phoenix Shaking Wing!”

The hearts of the Phoenix Clan members shook. Feng Nu outright stared at this senior of hers who'd condemned the Phoenix Clan. She was youngest ever to have achieved the Royal Wings transformation in the clan, yet she didn't have any modicum certainty that she'd be able to attain the fifth transformation by the time that she'd reached Yu Ru Yan's age.

Yu Ru Yan's three bodies suddenly charged at the four Phoenix clan members in chorus. The mysterious plumes in her hands seemed to be ethereal, as if they'd travelled through the nine heavens. With a flash of light, the multicolored light surged forwards in an attempt to wrap around the her strong foes.

The two elders unleashed the fruits of their many years of cultivation at the most crucial moment. Even though they were just using the third transformation, their qi was extremely explosive. They managed stop two of Yu Ru Yan's figures, but the final Yu Ru Yan still managed to force Feng Nu and Feng Xiang backwards, little by little.

At that moment, seven figures were engulfed in battle with one another; none of them were discernible. All of their surging qi had been compressed into the narrow area around them. As they fought, both reddish-gold and multicolored light entwined and separated alongside constant collisions. The ground shook with each explosion.

The person who had the most complicated emotions currently wasn't Thunder Dragon Body Lan Yu, but rather Nian Bing. Two

of the people he cared about the most stood on each side of the fight. He was afraid that Yu Ru Yan would harm Feng Nu, yet he was also scared that Feng Nu and the others would harm his auntie, who was like a mother to him. He unconsciously stepped forwards and began to mumble an incantation.

A hand larger than his shoulder suddenly slapped it. “I know that you’re worried about Ru Yan, but don’t interfere. This is an old grievance between Ru Yan and her clansmen. I believe that Ru Yan has the strength to defeat them.”

The person who’d stopped Nian Bing was Lan Yu. Even though he was in a berserker state, a faint smile was still present on his face.

“But...”

“There are no buts. Ru Yan is the most outstanding talent of the Phoenix Clan, and is also the number one expert of the Ao Lan Empire. Now that she’s used the fifth phoenix transformation, even I might not be much help against her. Just keep watching. I believe in Ru Yan’s strength.”

Even though Lan Yu had said this, Nian Bing was able to see that both of his powerful hands were balled up into fists.

Could he really just remain a spectator until they determined who was the victor and who was the loser? There were people on both sides that Nian Bing didn’t want to see hurt. Light flashed through his eyes, and he walked back to the wall. Suddenly, he

said, “Salamandhys, don’t just watch the show. Come on out and help me.”

Lan Yu and the others not embroiled in battle looked at Nian Bing in astonishment, not understanding what he meant.

Nian Bing didn’t intend to stop. He continued loudly, “Salamandhys, don’t hide. I know you’re there. Look at them, they’re destroying the place. If they continue, that stove over there will soon be destroyed. If you don’t come out and help me, I’ll won’t anywhere to cook a meal at. Could it be that you don’t want to eat the delicacies that I make with all my heart?”

The seven figures on the battlefield were fully engaged with keeping their opponents tied down. None of them had time to pay attention to Nian Bing. And even though Lan Yu, Lan Xun, Ru Yi, and Ru Meng had heard what he’d said, they hadn’t understood what he’d meant. Right at that moment, something strange happened.

A languid voice seemed to sound from all directions. “It’s not one meal, it’s three. Remember that Nian Bing, you stinky brat.”

A ghost-like red silhouette suddenly appeared and entered the fight that even Lan Yu had said he’d have trouble entering like a needle-thin gust of wind. Intense sounds of explosions rapidly went off, and the seven figures that had been engulfed in battle were all actually separated by that red figure.

Once everything had calmed down, Salamandhys was revealed to

be floating in the center of where they'd been fighting. He had a crooked grin on his face as he looked at everyone around him.

All three of Yu Ru Yan's bodies had recombined into one, and her face had become extremely pale. Only half of her phoenix plume was left.

On the other side of the battlefield, blood trailed from the corners of the Phoenix Clan member's mouths. They'd obviously been at a disadvantage in the battle.

Salamandhys turned to gaze at Yu Ru Yan. "Little girl, your feather hurt me! Tell me, how are you going to compensate me?"

He then turned to face the Phoenix Clan members. "Oh, right. You guys need to tone it down. Are you trying to tear me apart?"

Both parties were overwhelmed with shock. Only they, the parties involved, understood what had just happened. During that battle, all of them had surrounded their bodies with their strongest qi. The five peak experts of the Phoenix Clan had been going all against Yu Ru Yan, such that it would've been hard for even a martial god to interfere.

Yet, this red-robed youth had easily charged into the fray. Since the moment he had appeared, his arms had remained crossed over his chest; he hadn't attacked them. All he'd done was use his body to block Yu Ru Yan and other four's attacks. However, they'd clearly sensed that they weren't striking a human body, but rather a staunch mountain.

Actually, if they'd really struck a mountain, their attacks would've turned at least a portion of it into fine powder. Yet, this person was just fine! In fact, not only was fine, he was floating there and making sarcastic remarks!

Lan Yu sighed. "A martial god." In his imagination, there was no one who could do that save for a warrior in the martial god realm.

Salamandhys snorted contemptuously. "What's that? I resent being called such."

Yu Ru Yan coldly said, "This is our matter, why are you interfering?"

Salamandhys chuckled. "I'm not interfering, I'm merely inserting my body. You descendants of that stupid chicken seem a bit stronger than the previous generations, especially you."

He glanced towards Yu Ru Yan. "You could've easily killed them earlier; you wouldn't have even needed to use your hidden sixth transformation. If you didn't need it, I remember that that stupid chicken had some sort of 'five color soaring heavens' he used. Wouldn't it have been easy to kill them with that?

"However, the sixth transformation is your limit. Unless you have some sort of fortuitous encounter, you'll never be able to reach the seventh transformation. Your fight doesn't seem to be that urgent, go outside to finish it; don't destroy the stove. Nian Bing, don't forget: You have to make me three meals with all your

heart. However, how did you know that I came? With your cultivation, you shouldn't have been able to sense me."

Yu Ru Yan was shocked. This unfathomable youth had actually completely seen through her. On the other hand, Feng Xu and the others were even more shocked. They knew very well that the sixth transformation not only meant that Yu Ru Yan had achieved a half-phoenix body, but that her strength neared that of a martial god's.

If she managed to break through and achieve the seventh transformation, she'd become a true martial god. She really had been lenient on them before; if she hadn't, she would've immediately used her sixth transformation, which was impossible for them to stop.

Nian Bing laughed and walked over. "Don't worry Salamandhys. I'll do as I promised. As for how I found out that you were here... it was just too easy. Even though I couldn't sense you with my strength, when I was preparing the ingredients you were swallowing so loudly that it was impossible for me not to notice you. I'm not deaf."

He then turned to Yu Ru Yan. "Auntie Yu, please don't fight anymore. Since you don't have any intention of killing them, just let them go."

Salamandhys was shocked, and a rare blush appeared on his face. He muttered to himself, "Was I really that loud...?"

Yu Ru Yan managed to recover her wits. “Nian Bing, you sure are sweet on that girlfriend of yours.” She deliberately shot Feng Nu a glance when she said this. Feng Nu instantly turned red and lowered her head.

Feng Xu looked extremely angry and flicked his wrist. His longsword streaked forwards like a meteor across the moon as it headed straight towards Nian Bing’s chest.

“Fuck you, anyone who kills him wrongs my stomach.” The high quality sword had somehow fallen into Salamandhys’ hands, while Yu Ru Yan had jumped in front of Nian Bing.

Salamandhys toyed with the sword for a moment, then waved his hand, which caused the sword to immediately turn into molten iron. As it flowed to the ground he coldly gazed at the Phoenix Clan members. “I’m telling you right now. Nian Bing might not be strong, but he’s my personal chef. As such, he’s under my protection. Whoever wants to touch him is messing with my stomach. And whoever messes with my stomach is my greatest enemy. Since you attacked me, don’t accuse me of not warning you. With your puny level of strength, I can turn you into cinders by simply lifting my arm.”

Feng Nu suddenly said in shock, “Y-you’re that dragon. How is this possible, how are you a human?”

Ever since Salamandhys had appeared, she’d felt that his voice was very familiar. And when Nian Bing had called him Salamandhys, alongside Salamandhys’ tone, she’d finally deduced that this red-robed man was the fire dragon from the cavern

previously. When he'd used his body to block their attacks, she under understood how Nian Bing could have appeared here.

“Dragon?” Everyone cried out in shock.

Salamandhys arrogantly replied, “That’s right! I’m the mighty Fire Dragon King, Salamandhys. Alright, you silly chickens can get lost now. Nian Bing, make me some food. I’ve slept for two days, so now I’m rather hungry.”

Feng Xu did several double takes towards Salamandhys, then immediately determined that they couldn’t linger there any longer. Even if the person in front of them wasn’t a transformed dragon, they still couldn’t deal with Yu Ru Yan.

“We’ll leave.” He headed for the outside.

Feng Kong, Feng Xiang, and Feng Nu all followed him out of the duke’s mansion. Yu Ru Yan didn’t stop them; she merely frowned as she watched them leave. Nian Bing thought to call out to Feng Nu, but when he thought back to their previous conversation and Feng Xu’s attitude, he endured it. He didn’t want to cause any more trouble for Feng Nu.

“Good, good. They’re gone now. To give my personal chef some face, I’ll help you clean up.” Yellow light wrapped Salamandhys’ body, then the halo of light entered the ground. The light flashed intensely as the giant fissures slowly closed underneath the yellow light. The ground shook until it had recovered its original appearance.

Lan Yu said in shock, “Earth magic!”

Salamandhys clapped his hands as he walked over to the table and pulled out a chair like he hadn’t done anything. He patted his stomach and said, “I’m so hungry! Quickly now, Nian Bing.”

Yu Ru Yan didn’t know what exactly had happened, but ever since her opponent had admitted that he was a dragon, she hadn’t been able to give him the cold shoulder. As a member of the Phoenix Clan she of knew the strength of the dragons on the Yangguang continent. She nodded at Nian Bing and said, “Even this senior dragon likes your food. Auntie is looking forward to it, Nian Bing. I’ll have to trouble you.”

Chapter 76.1 - Nine Green Divine Dragons

Nian Bing smiled slightly. “It’s not any trouble at all, Auntie. I’ve always wanted to make a meal for you! Please, sit. It will just take a moment.” He managed to push away his concern for Feng Nu and walked over to the stove. Yu Ru Yan and everyone else’s hectic battle had nearly burnt the ground away. Fortunately, Salamandhys had appeared; with his imitation earth magic, the ground had recovered completely.

At the moment, Yu Ru Yan had managed to calm down. Her pale face had regained some of its color, and she easily walked over to Salamandhys and sat down next to him. As for Lan Yu, he deactivated his Thunder Dragon Body and draped an outer covering over his body, then sat down next to Salamandhys, with Ru Yi and her sister to his right.

As Nian Bing began to prepare, Yu Ru Yan suddenly asked, “Nian Bing how did you become familiar with that young lady of the Phoenix Clan?”

Nian Bing’s mind went blank for a moment. “You mean Feng Nu? We became familiar in the Ice Moon Empire; we’ve known each other for over half a year.”

Yu Ru Yan asked, “So you knew about her identity as a member of the Phoenix Clan?”

Nian Bing nodded. “She told me not too long ago.” He couldn’t help but give Salamandhys a look.

Salamandhys snorted. “What’re you looking at. Hurry up and make the food.”

Yu Ru Yan’s eyes seemed to be bottomless pits as she said, “I clearly saw how much she cares about you, and you seem to care about her. However, there’s something I must tell you: the Phoenix Clan isn’t permitted to marry outsiders. You saw what happened just now; that was all because I married Yu ge. Of course, I don’t have any regrets, but I have to warn you, if you really want to be with that girl, you need to become much stronger.

“If you don’t, you don’t have the slightest chance of ever getting the Phoenix Clan to agree to a marriage with a human. You should make your meal now, we can talk later.””

Nian Bing felt happy. If he could learn more about the Phoenix Clan from Auntie Yu, a strong expert from the Phoenix Clan, then there was no doubt that it would be advantageous for his and Feng Nu’s relationship in the future. He gave her a slight nod, then took out a meter long plate from his space ring.

When he saw this tray, Salamandhys’ eyes sparkled. “What a good item, so nice! Let me use it, hehe.”

Yu Ru Yan glanced towards Salamandhys and said with a smile, “From your excellency’s attire, I think you must be the Lord Fire Dragon of the Yangguang Continent.”

Salamandhys snorted. “I’m a fire dragon king, not a fire dragon.

You should make that clear.”

Yu Ru Yan couldn't help but giggle at his response. “Yes, yes, a fire dragon king. I've heard that not only are you the strongest species of the dragons, but also the proudest. It seems that the rumours weren't wrong in the slightest. If we have the chance, I'd like to compare notes with Lord Fire Dragon King.”

Salamandhys shot her a glance. “Compare notes? There's no need. You're far too weak to do so. Only when you reach the ninth transformation will you have the strength to compare notes with me. However, reaching the ninth transformation is no easy task. At the ninth transformation, that little chicken was close to this Lord Dragon God in strength. You're still way too far from that level of strength. You should know that the final transformation of the Phoenix Transformation is the most quintessential.

Yu Ru Yan nodded. “Of course I know this. What a pity though. Even though I've managed to stumble my way to the sixth transformation, the last three are simply too difficult for me. It's almost impossible for me to complete them. If I was able to enter the seventh transformation, I would actually be able to utilize the Phoenix's Body. Even though I couldn't win against you, a dragon king, I could at least engage in battle with you. Although you are a dragon king, and even though you are high and mighty, you still have to admit that the phoenix is the strongest creature on the continent.”

“Bullshit! The strongest creatures are the dragons! When did it become that little chicken?” Salamandhys angrily retorted.

However, Yu Ru Yan was still smiling at him. “Is that really so? If my ancestors had numbered as many as the dragons, I wonder if you’d still be able to say that. Lord Dragon God was indeed powerful, such that my ancestor couldn’t compare, but he can’t really be described as a dragon at that realm. A dragon like you, however, couldn’t contend with my ancestor. Even if you’re a dragon king, you could at most face off against an eighth transformation phoenix, right? For me to only be able to compare notes with you at the ninth level is a bit of a boast.”

Salamandhys’ face was red, “You’re exaggerating. That silly chicken’s greatest advantage was not being afraid of taking its opponent down with it. With that sort of skill, naturally I couldn’t be its opponent. I’m not immortal like it.”

Yu Ru Yan didn’t continue to provoke Salamandhys. Instead to turned back to face Nian Bing and smiled at him.

Nian Bing had heard their whole conversation. He suddenly realized that, even though Yu Ru Yan had left the Phoenix Clan, at her core, she still always thought of herself as a member of the Phoenix Clan. If she didn’t why should she bicker with Salamandhys, who was obviously stronger than her, for the sake of the Phoenix Clan’s pride?

Nian Bing suddenly felt dejected when he realized this. He was much weaker than all of these strong people. When would he be able to avenge his parents? Ten years sounded like a long period of time... but was it enough time for him to reach the Ice and Snow Goddess’ strength? That was only a dream. Even Salamandhys wasn’t certain of his victory against her, to speak nothing of him.

Dispirited, the nine cucumbers he put on the tray were cut slightly uneven.

As Salamandhys' senses were extremely keen, he immediately noticed that Nian Bing's state was off, and said with dissatisfaction, "Nian Bing, you stinky brat, you better use all of your strength for me. You said that you'd wholeheartedly devote yourself to making me delicacies; are you thinking of reneging on your promise?"

Salamandhys' words immediately roused Nian Bing from his dejected mood. An ice cold sensation spread from his head to the rest of his body.

Nian Bing, Nian Bing... How could he be discouraged? The Ice and Snow Goddess' worshipper was strong, but in the end she's still just a human who's cultivated to such heights. You have to become stronger, for father and mother's sake. You can't give up, even if there's only a one in ten thousand chance. This is your eternal goal!

When he lifted his head again, the look in his eyes had changed: They were now incomparably firm and resolute. However, he didn't say anything. He simply propped up the tray with right hand, and kept his other hand on the stove tap. Afterwards, a cold aura emerged from his palms; this was an ice spell. The countertop was immediately covered in a ring of ice. He quickly placed the tray in the center of the ice, then flicked his wrist. The Free Wind's Gently Hymn—Proud Sky appeared in his hand when he did so.

The wind did indeed pick up under the influence of the Proud

Sky Knife. Nian Bing moved; his left finger tip flicking up slightly, causing a cucumber to be sent flying into the air. As the cucumber rose higher and higher into the air, Nian Bing envisioned the camel chef Zi Xiu's Dense Jade Screen. Right now, the only thing he could see was the cucumber twirling through the air. The moment it reached the apex of its trajectory, the Proud Sky Knife moved. Green light and phantom knife silhouettes flashed. This was the Proud Sky Knife's ability. Pronounced marks were left on the cucumber, but Nian Bing had perfectly controlled his strength, so as to not completely cut through the cucumber. The moment that the cucumber began to fall, Nian Bing's second knife arrived.

A strange scene appeared, as the cucumber seemed to be suspended in mid-air. The naked eye could only see that the cucumber was gradually growing longer as it gently floated down onto the tray.

In just a few moments, a portion of the cucumber had arranged itself around the center of the tray. The green light receded, and the cucumber left in the air drifted downwards. Nian Bing then stuck out his left index finger and squeezed the tail end of the cucumber. He flicked his wrist, and the cucumber accurately spun three times before settling on the plate. The head of the cucumber rose up in the middle of the plate, while the end of the cucumber stuck out to the side.

"Great knife work," Yu Ru Yan and Lan Yu praised simultaneously. As they were martial arts experts, they were confident that they could attain Nian Bing's level of skill, but definitely couldn't claim that they'd be able to cut the cucumber as uniformly as Nian Bing had, without causing it to break. They had faintly been able to sense that his every strike had been

accompanied with a pulse of ice air, which had frozen the cucumber as it fell. If he hadn't done so, the cucumber might've broken from the force.

Nian Bing seemed to not hear them as a second cucumber flew up into the air. A total of nine cucumbers flew up into the air and were completed the same way. When they were all finished, the tray in front of him had been neatly lined with the jade cucumbers. Afterwards, the green light from Proud Sky disappeared and it was sent back into his space ring. As he observed his masterpiece, Nian Bing couldn't help but feel excited. His body and magic had had a qualitative leap from those days of training. Although his knife work wasn't any better than Zi Xiu's Dense Jade Screen, his culinary arts had become that much better since their battle. What Master said was true: It's better to walk a thousand miles than read a thousand books. Only by continually exchanging pointers with culinary experts could his own culinary arts reach a higher level.

He waved his right arm and the Demonic Engraving turned into a blue light in his palm. The scene from the Pure Wind House was then recreated in the Duke's residence. Nian Bing stood at the edge of the stove, then bent forward ninety degrees and, with his left hand, sent the entire tray spinning into the air. The Demonic Engraving trembled in his hands, then turned into a blue ball of light.

At this point, he had seen both a greater wind and fire dragon. As such, the image of a dragon was firmly imprinted in Nian Bing's mind. Without any hesitation, he pushed the ball of blue light directly into the middle of the tray. His hand moved so quickly that even the top experts Salamandhys and Yu Ru Yan couldn't see what he was doing.

Nian Bing's left hand wasn't idle either; it began to continuously speed up the tray's rotation. However, the moment its speed hit its peak, he actually shut his eyes. When he did so, the hand that was pressed to the center of the tray and didn't seem like it would move, finally moved, beginning to dance in a slow circle around the tray. Each successive ring became larger. This time, Salamandhys could clearly see what was going, and his eyes showed his surprise, for he found that every time Nian Bing's hand moved a fraction, at least ten cuts were made to the rapidly spinning tray. Fragments were flying everywhere, but they all followed a regular pattern. As he continued, a faint icy mist began to arise around the tray from the particles of cucumber. What divine, miraculous skill. When Nian Bing's hand had made its final revolution, the icy fog had completely obscured everyone's vision. After three successive revolutions, he finally corrected his posture.

Demon Engraving vanished, leaving a small porcelain bottle in its place. He then flicked his wrist, causing white flour to fuse into the tray covered in green fog. Afterwards, he waved his right arm, and a lychee appeared in his hand. He stripped off its out layer to reveal its snow white flesh. He smiled. Perfect. This was the only word he could use to describe this dish.

Because the ice on the tray had melted at this point, the stove had become wet. Nian Bing's hand stopped at the edge of the tray, but the green mist remained, akin to miniature green clouds. If one breather near them, they'd be able to clearly sense a rural chill, which was quite soothing.

Nian Bing picked up the tray, then walked over to the able and carefully set down the large tray in the center of the table.

Salamandhys impatiently said, “What did you make? What’s so good about nine little cucumbers? No matter how you make them, they’re still just cucumbers.”

Nian Bing smiled. “Salamandhys, let me teach you the first lesson of tasting food: A good dish not only tastes good, but excels in five distinguishable aspects. These aspects are color, fragrance, taste, thought, and shape. At the same time, there must be some level of innovation and creativity. All of these things together make a good dish. My Nine Mysterious Dragons Hidden Within Clouds of Ice is such a dish. Oh, that right. I wanted to teach you something else. Before you’ve tasted the dish, you shouldn’t determine if it’s good or bad so easily. After all, you can’t say whether it’s delicious until it’s in your mouth. What do you say?”

Salamandhys’ mind went blank, but he nodded subconsciously. Next to him, Yu Ru Yan couldn’t help but click her tongue in wonder. A proud, greater dragon like Salamandhys was actually not replying to Nian Bing’s teachings. That was truly an amazing skill. However, she was currently extremely excited to see what was hidden behind the green mist—what sort of delicacy it held.

Nian Bing carefully placed the lychee inside of the ice mist. His right hand then stirred the ice mist, which caused the fog to immediately disperse, and everyone around the table was able to smell the incredibly fresh fragrance. Everyone present subconsciously took in a deep breath, and Yu Ru Yan even felt like her wounds had been alleviated.